

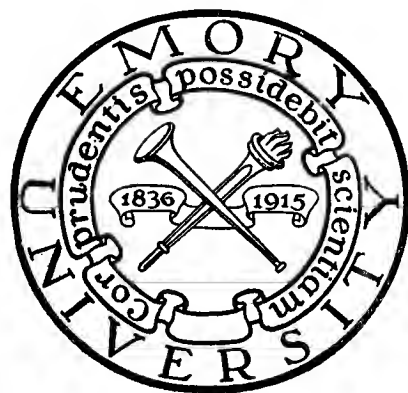
THE GREAT SECRET

BY HUME NISBET



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THE GREAT SECRET

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A TALE OF TO-MORROW

BY

HUME NISBET

Author of

"Bail Up," "The Savage Queen,"

"The Queen's Desire,"

"A Bushgirl's Romance," Etc. Etc.

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DEDICATION

TO ALL THOSE WHO, NOT QUITE SATISFIED WITH TO-DAY,
MAY BE SEEKING AFTER A HAPPIER TO-MORROW,

THE AUTHOR BEGS TO

Dedicate

THIS WORK

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P R E F A C E.

A PREFACE is an explanation or an apology from the Author to the Reader.

In the present work the Author finds it difficult to write this Preface, for he cannot explain, and he does not care to apologise, honestly and sincerely as he desires to give no offence.

If he might make use of a somewhat hackneyed phrase, he would like to say that he was *impressed* to write what is here printed; in fact, that he had no rest, night

nor day, until he accomplished his task.

Yet it was a work over which he hesitated long and doubtfully before beginning, for, although intensely interested in the subject, he would have liked if he could have deferred it until a more convenient season. But with that *inward* or *outward* urging, he was forced to give way at last and lend his pen, in spite of his early training, prejudices, and later-gained practical materialism, with the dread of incurring ridicule or giving offence, protesting all the while at this strange amble of his Pegasus.

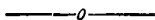
Now, however, that the labour is over, he trusts that the result may interest some who may be curious about such occult matters, comfort others who may not be quite satisfied with what they

do know at present, and exonerate the Author from all blame. He has done what he could to lift a small corner of the heavy veil which hangs between to-day and to-morrow, and now begs to leave this *Great Secret* to the thinking minds of

THE READER.

1895.

THE GREAT SECRET.



CHAPTER I.

THE EMBARKATION.

PHILIP MORTLAKE stood near the gangway of the *Rockhampton*, and watched with languid attention the passengers who were to be his companions for the next six weeks. He had come early on board, and alone—a weary and world-worn man, the wrong side of forty, disappointed with life, disillusioned, prematurely grey, with what might have been ties and fetters of affection snapped and withered. He was leaving England, hopeless and indifferent, and going where or to what he neither knew nor cared.

Philip Mortlake was in a very bad way, and likely to be worse if something did not come to give him the rousing up which was required in his case. He was troubled with a disease which is considerably on the increase at the close of this busy century, a trouble not unlike and yet different from *ennui*, because it proceeds from opposite causes, a longing for our class, a weariness which is all-devouring, a melancholy and apathy which cannot be lifted.

The victim to *ennui* has been born aimless, and surfeited himself by indulgences ; but the victim to this trouble is the active worker who has over-exerted himself, the passionate lover who has been wantonly maltreated in the court of love, and who at last breaks down, in spite of his frantic efforts to act the part of a man.

Philip Mortlake, after years of battling with Destiny, had been struck down, and, like the wounded animal, all that he knew yet of his wounds was the desire for solitude.

His doctors had advised him to go for a long voyage, not by himself, but where there was good company, people who did not know about him or his peculiar reasons for leaving England. The condolences of friends were poison to his mind. A man may be comforted by friendship if death has snatched all that he loves from him, but not in such a case as Philip's.

He had loved, wooed and married a woman who gave him her heart in return, then, after a period of trust and happiness, she had changed towards him ; instead of trust she had plagued him almost to the point of madness with vile suspicions, evil and groundless charges, until gradually, without reason or provocation on his part, her love and faith had become the direst hatred. She had grown to be his most bitter enemy, who would pause at nothing to encompass his ruin and destruction.

Had they been lovers only they might have parted, and the hatred on one side and the passionate gnawing misery on the other might have been fought down in the course of time. But they were married, and could not be liberated from the yoke, except at the loss of their reputation.

Philip Mortlake loved his wife, or would have loved her if she had allowed him to do so. She was a virtuous

and religious woman—intensely religious, as far as her mistaken ideas about religion went. He was not religious, but he had a certain moral dignity which made him abhor being what his hating partner so constantly charged him with.

His friends told him that she was insane, and should be shut up ; that it was a monomania which he should not trouble himself about. They were friends only who could not be expected to enter into his memory of the past fond days ; they saw only an evil-minded woman trying to drag a man down to shame and perdition ; but he carried with him for ever the picture of a fresh young girl who had loved him once, but whom he had always adored ; and this was his misery and humiliation now, the calamity that had broken him down at last.

Yes, he was now a liberated man, as far as the law could free him, and the woman could curse and revile him when she was not praying.

He had humbled himself to the dust first in the futile effort to win her back ; then, seeing how idle all these efforts were, he gave her what she wanted—her liberty.

It was easily enough managed with a little money. The creature was bought to swear in court that she was his mistress, while he had only to remain silent under the charges of cruelty and unfaithfulness ; and she had not spared him.

The papers had recounted all his dastardly acts of unmanly abuse of this pure wife ; the audience in the court hissed him when he departed, shamed, yet free ; the judges had said in strong terms that hanging was too mild a punishment for such an unmitigated scoundrel ; and so he had become a branded criminal,

and his wife an universally pitied martyr, on this day when he stood alone, watching the passengers bidding their friends farewell at the dock of Tilbury.

He had some friends who had known him in the past and who would have been glad enough to have wished him God-speed on his voyage, but he did not want them, and therefore had taken his passage out without letting them know his intentions. It seemed ridiculous for a man at his time of life (for he had *felt* very old for some years past) to let such a trifle as love trouble him so greatly, such a mere modern incident as divorce prey so much upon his mind.

If he had been a young man and lived in the romantic first half of the century, his trouble might have been defined as a broken-heart; but, alas! he was no longer young, and the doctors decided that his trouble was a complication of mental fag, rheumatic gout and a disorganised liver, therefore they ordered him first to take a course of mineral waters and afterwards a tour round the world, and doubtless they were correct in their diagnosis.

He had taken their advice, as men must do when they have lost their will-grip and have become nervous and demoralised, and spent a couple of preliminary weeks at a Hydropathic in the company of other health-wrecks, who find the most absorbing topic of conversation the recounting of their different real or imaginary ailments.

On his entrance to the establishment he was interviewed by a doctor attached to the place, who gave him his first little bit of amusement and so assisted in his cure, therefore he did not grudge him his fee. He, the doctor, gravely felt his pulse, commanded him to exhibit his tongue, and then proceeded to tap his body.

"Do you feel a fluttering of the heart?" asked the doctor.

"No," replied the patient.

"But if you were to walk rapidly up a hill, would you?"

"I think I might."

"Ah! very bad symptoms," continued the doctor, with an ominous shake of his head. "You are in a most critical state, I can assure you—heart disorganised, liver abnormally enlarged, kidneys seriously deranged—"

"How long have I got to live?" asked the patient, with the first twinkle of humour in his wearied eyes that he had been able to call up for some time.

"I cannot answer that question, but you must be very careful. I shall write you out a course of treatment, and I think you will find this place suit you, if you stay long enough."

The doctor took him to the bath-room and ordered him a vapour bath with a mustard *pack*, and then filled up a form for three days' treatment, in which massage formed part.

He obeyed the doctor's advice, but added a little to it, as he had no desire to stay longer than he could help in this nest of valetudinarians, and opened the bathman's eyes when he told him what the doctor had ordered. It was the most heroic course that had ever been attempted at that health resort.

"I never knew the doctor push on a patient like this before," said the bathman, as he obeyed the supposed orders from headquarters. "Why, you will be better in a week."

"That's what the doctor wants—to work a miracle," replied the audacious Philip, as he plunged recklessly

into vapour baths, mustard *packs*, wet and electric massages, with copious draughts from the sacred wells.

In a week he was reduced to a fine state of passive quietude, and could look round and observe his neighbour. One lady opposite him at dinner had been ordered to abstain rigidly from taking any salt with her food ; another, close at hand, to regard sugar as poison to her system. The husband of the saltless lady was forced to exist on jugged hare exclusively ; in fact, he began to think, as he heard the varied treatment of the patients, what a series of practical and remunerative jokes a doctor's life must be, and he no longer wondered that the successful ones wore such compressed lips and stolid faces, or that they could tell such capital stories after dinner without grinning.. If he had only studied medicine and practised, he might have been able to endure his domestic calamities much more easily.

One patient, after fixing him with a glassy eye for several nights in the smoke-room without speaking, abruptly broke the spell of silence at last by saying,—

“I believe in diet entirely ; but what do you think of the marriage laws ?”

Philip thought for a moment, and then replied that “dieting was a good idea and that the marriage laws were decidedly faulty.”

“Women are born devils—that's my opinion of them,” replied the man savagely, and then he relapsed into gloomy silence.

“Another victim to matrimony,” thought Philip, as he looked at the fire and puffed his pipe.

He spent an innocent week at this Hydropathic, where each visitor took the other on trust and made themselves agreeable, and if he had been at all impressionable might have drifted easily into matrimony a second

time ; yet it did him good, for he was tenderly treated, and therefore was able to hold up his head a little and shove back his shame and brooding care.

He had learnt one thing also, which, if hurtful to his vanity as a man, consoled him in other ways. He was too old to interest young women, although not yet old enough to get them to make up to him, therefore he might safely indulge himself in their company. Professional flirts, middle-aged spinsters and widows might lay traps for him, but woman's devotion was over as far as he was concerned ; he must remain an outsider and watch the game of life for the rest of his days.

Therefore he leaned carelessly against the side of the steamship and looked at the people, young and old, passing along to their different cabins, or fussing about their luggage, with something of the same curiosity that a disembodied spirit might be supposed to feel if it revisited earth. His wife had gone from him, and all his interests and ties were snapped. He was no longer a human being, he was only a spectator.

There was nothing about his personal appearance to attract attention or engage interest. His hair and beard were getting rapidly grey ; very soon they would be bleached white, and then he would take his place as a veteran. His eyes were blue, and had once been keen and bright, his figure strongly built but carelessly dressed ; and what if his heart tingled for sympathy, he did not show this desire, therefore no careless spectator could perceive it. To such he was only an ordinary, middle-aged man, with a good-natured face, who stood quietly, smoking heavily, waiting for the ship to unmoor and the friends to say farewell, before he went down to arrange his cabin or prepare for the rough waters of Biscay Bay.

That is all that people can see of the tragedies of real life, except on the stage where the morose comrades pose, unless they happen to have suffered themselves. Then perhaps they acquire an extra sense or instinct, such as Philip Mortlake now possessed—the gift of reading below the surface.

He was able with this misery-given gift to read most of the passengers as they passed him and pretty accurately gauge their habits and pursuits, for it is astonishing how plainly the occupations of humanity print indexes on the faces, and, as he afterwards found on closer intimacy, his first impressions had not been far out.

But what struck him most curiously was the foreign element who came on board on this morning—a few to the saloon, but the greater bulk to the second cabin. In the first class he saw all sorts and conditions of men and women—Christians and Jews, men and women travelling for health or pleasure, others business bent, with more than the usual sprinkling of people who did not speak the English language.

It was the first long trip that the *Rockhampton* was taking. One of the latest improvements in passenger packets, she had done her trial trip satisfactorily, and was now about to prove her superior speed round the world. A splendid specimen of ironwork and machinery, with fittings like the finest West End hotel, so that her complement of passengers was complete.

Philip noticed that most of the passengers for the second class were dark-bearded, dark-eyed and swarthy-visaged men, with only a small proportion of women. Most of these men carried their own meagre luggage themselves, and bore it carefully along, inquiring

their way in broken English, and jealously keeping themselves aloof from each other. About a couple of dozen went to the first-class division, the rest, as we have said, went to the second cabin.

While Philip was languidly watching this migration, his attention was attracted by one woman who came alone, like himself, without friends to see her off.

A thin woman, plainly dressed, about twenty-five, with dim, grey eyes, pale cheeks and brown hair—a woman who might have been good-looking if she had been happy, but who looked, as he himself was, uninteresting as she glided along, looking at no one.

He knew the symptoms which that pale face with the wearied eyes expressed, and felt a surge of sympathy swell up in his breast as he followed her slowly down to the saloon. She had tried the world as he had, and found it wanting. They were both desolate souls on an arid strand, waiting hopelessly and helplessly on their fate.

And Fate had brought them together on this ocean hotel.

They might hate each other, perhaps, for they were both defiant and miserable. Philip Mortlake was inured to hatred, and prepared almost to court it again as he took his seat beside her at the lunch prepared for the passengers and their friends.

CHAPTER II.

THE VAGUE HORROR.

A COUPLE of weeks at sea is sufficient to bring the stranger passengers together and make them tolerably intimate. A month, and they know all about each other, and belong, more or less, all to one family. Families quarrel and make up again, so do passengers at sea. Some vow friendships, which are forgotten, when they land ; some make love which lasts a little longer ; others remember those bewitching days and nights at sea longer and more tenderly than they ought to do.

The *Rockhampton* was rushing with regular piston-drives to her doom. She had touched at Gibraltar, Malta, Port Said, Suez, Ceylon, and was now pushing her way through the soft waves, azure by day, phosphorescent by night, towards the centre belt of the world, those vast and trembling waters, brimful of mystery and deliciousness as well as terror, for here the monsters of the deep have their abode—the blue-nosed shark, most ferocious of all its vicious tribe, with other strange scaly mammoths, which old sailors tell about and no one believes in this cynical age of cold reason.

Philip Mortlake had recovered his nerves and mental equilibrium during this month at sea. He had quitted England with the shamed feeling upon him that he was a pariah, and his excited nerves gave him this morbid self-consciousness. Now that he had recovered

tone, he knew that the world does not care one iota what *any* man and woman does with their lives. It is vanity, born of solitude and brooding, which makes us fancy that we are of importance enough to disturb the daily routine of our friends and neighbours. If we write a big book, paint a great picture, win a battle, or commit a monstrous crime, we only rise to the surface for a moment, show our heads, as it were, with a portion of our shoulders over the other swimmers, and then we subside once again into the general crowd.

He could wonder now why he had given up his clubs and shunned his friends, which was the best sign of returning health. Who need care about the nasty remarks of a purblind old judge, more than the school-boy does about the cut of the master's cane? What although his club friends might say behind his back that he was a brute, he knew before that they had called him a fool? They would shake hands with him the same, drink with him, eat with him, and revile some other dear absentee to him as heartily as ever, for in the end of the nineteenth century all the glass houses are broken, and no one thinks about re-glazing their shattered property, with so many brick-bats flying all round. Virtue gets no more credit than does vice. It has become an optional habit, like the putting on of a dress-suit.

He had known a literary notoriety, who was much admired and sought after, by some people. This *thing* had been kicked times out of number for his opinions and insinuations, but that made no difference to him, he still went about with unabashed brow, ready to present the appropriate portions of his anatomy to any aggressive toe, and men smoked, drank and dined with him the same as usual, abusing him no more than they

did the most virtuous members. These things Philip could now recall with philosophy, as he lounged and smoked about the deck on these eternal summer days through which they rushed.

A black-leg and thief had to disappear for a moment, but he was soon forgotten; the murderer went into Newgate, and was buried in quicklime; the traducer got kicked, yet a fortnight covered them all mercifully in oblivion, and they emerged once more purified and made welcome, all save the poor fellow who had been covered with quicklime, of course—he had to be content with oblivion. That's *fin-de-siècle* society. The good and the evil drift together, and get the drift of the river over them both, until there does not seem much difference, for they are costumed and enshrined alike.

He had another excitement, however, which recalled the Englishman in him and made a man of him. There was something wrong about the passengers. There was a mystery going on aboard which called forth his active qualities, made him more observant, and did a lot to steady his nerves, by supplying him with another excitement.

There was danger on board this peaceful-looking steam packet,—treason, anarchy,—danger to each of the saloon passengers; a crowd of harmless enough people, who had done nothing particularly base to deserve death, and who did not covet that release from their mediocrity to a higher plane. They were content, as the pigs and aldermen are, in their eating, drinking and digestive periods, and Nature had made them so.

He had seen things on board the ship which had woke up his fighting qualities, the nearest approach to

soul that Westerns can aspire to, according to the Easterns.

There are different qualities and degrees of danger which touch the human heart with more or less intensity. The danger of death in battle, or while the tempest is raging at its fiercest, and driving the vessel full butt against the rocks. These thrill the brave heart with an excitement which is almost a pleasure after the first pang of anticipated agony has passed. They know, who have been wounded, that the plunge of a dagger or a sword into the body gives no more pain than the prick of a pin, less if the stroke is swiftly dealt and deadly. Those who have been crushed by a fall or a heavy blow can never recall any sensation of pain when the smash came, it is afterwards, when Nature begins to set about the mending, that the pain comes.

A bed of sickness, if lingering, is probably one of the hardest ordeals humanity has to pass through before the friend of man—Death—liberates him, for that is Nature's inquisition, where no pity is shown to the victim while consciousness remains to endure. But the most excruciating of all dangers is when it attacks the imagination with its nightmare-like vagueness and suspense of uncertainty. Hell-fire is one of those dangers which has weighed upon and worn the imagination for so many centuries, making base slaves of the stoutest hearts, as Hamlet says :—

‘ To die,—to sleep ;—

To sleep ! perchance to dream ; ay, there's the rub :

For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come,

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

Must give us pause.

It was a vague and horrible uncertainty, and horror like that of Hades which had fallen upon the passengers

of the *Rockhampton*. Ever since leaving Ceylon, a rumour had crept through the ship that there were Anarchists on board in force, with infernal machines, bombs, dynamite and other explosives, enough to wipe them off the face of the ocean as completely as if they had never existed.

How the rumour got about no one knew ; perhaps the dynamitards themselves had originated it, knowing so well the paralysing effect of terror. It was not talked about nor discussed, for with the terror had come suspicion, and as they were all strangers, or at least had been before this voyage began, each eyed the other askance and waited with horror on the *dénouement*. Were the infernal clocks already wound up to go so many hours or days with that deadly precision and regularity until the fatal hour arrived? This was the thought which occupied each mind as they promenaded the deck, tried to enjoy the breakfast, tiffin, or dinner, or music of an evening. Was it annihilation the murderers had resolved upon, or only the practical capture of the ship. Could they have been sure that it was only the ship the demons wanted, the others would have been comparatively happy ; but the uncertainty was the evil which troubled them one and all.

The captain and officers went about their duties outwardly calm, yet with the same uncertainty that tortured the passengers. The stewards brought round the dishes with trembling hands and pallid faces ; the passengers played with their forks, knives and spoons, chattering noisily with each other while they waited, as the sleeper seems to wait on the unknown horror which has chained all his faculties of resistance. They talked wildly about anything to keep themselves from shrieking out their terror. Men as well as women were under the awful

spell, and already were completely demoralised. Half a dozen resolute men could have taken that ship any hour.

Philip Mortlake found it an easy task to read this general panic. He was not quite free from it himself, yet he had the advantage of being a little more certain about the enemies than were the others, for he had kept his eyes open, and studied his fellow-passengers.

The quietest and most indifferent he saw was the woman who had so strangely interested him at first, by reason of the apathy which misery had fixed upon her.

She was an Englishwoman, by name Mrs Austin, but whether a widow or a wife no one as yet knew. Philip had watched her keenly on the first day, yet had not intruded himself upon her, preferring to wait her own time.

It chanced, whether by accident or fate, that they were placed together at the table during the voyage, and thus a kind of intimacy grew between them. They talked commonplaces at the table, and often found themselves together on the deck, where naturally they sat and conversed, or walked occasionally, so that he had greater opportunities of observing her, and it must be said his admiration grew as the days passed, for she was not an ordinary woman.

A refined lady undoubtedly she was. Philip Mortlake could not have been interested in any other type of woman. Quiet and grave always, it seemed as if those lips had lost the art of smiling, the grey eyes all humidity or light. They were fine eyes, and would have been softly grey had they not been so steadfast and dry. The time for tears seemed to have gone past for this lonely spirit, as it was for him. Cynicism also had

passed, for after grief comes the period of defiance, which produces cynicism, and after that the death-in-life—apathy. She was at the apathetic stage, which even the shock of an anticipated bomb could not shake or terrorise.

She partook of the dishes regularly, and with moderation, dressed always well, yet without ostentation, as a lady must do. When speaking, she uttered her words evenly and correctly, with a voice that was silvery and soft, yet, like her eyes, a little too colourless. To the others she seemed to be an uninteresting person, for the jokes passed without any recognition from her, and humorists, great or little, do not like that kind of reception of their small change, yet, if the subject was serious, she took her share in it, without any apparent effort, and conversed modestly and well.

She looked to be twenty-nine or thirty ; possibly she was younger, for sorrow and disappointment age one quickly. Philip saw more than a few white hairs shining amongst her brown tresses ; these, with the tiny lines at the side of her firm lips and across and between the brows, revealed a history to him which he would fain have penetrated for the purpose of consoling. Perhaps she read that intuition in him, as well as something of his own drama, for she made him more of an intimate than she did the others.

Her figure was willowy and slender, yet firmly built and healthy ; the hands were white, small, and carefully cared for—such hands, long and shapely, that wearied men like to have passed over their fevered brows. The wedding-ring and keeper were on the left hand, with a few other rings. The strongest minded of women cannot dispense with those feminine adornments. This taste has come down the ages with them from the days when

they were the slaves and toys of men, as they must always be when they are happy.

Her face would have been a pretty one under the conditions of content and happiness, the face of a woman made to honour and worship the man whom she recognised as her master. It was feminine to the core, although it had been petrified by disillusion. "Curse the man who had wrought this woeful change," thought Philip as he watched that face, for only a man could have done it, and the alteration must have been the work of time, as the soft sands of past ages have been turned into stone by slow degrees, degrees of hardening with, perhaps, the final convulsion which buried all from the light of hope.

She had a fair face this lonely Mrs Austin. The features were Greek-like, sensitive and refined; while they lived they had been mobile and quick to flash into warmth, the red lips to part lovingly, the eyes to become deep and lustrous, the oval cheeks to flush with rosy dyes, and the brown hair to gleam with sunshine. She had once been a woman tender and pulsating, she was now a statue calm and cold.

He had looked at that face day after day, and built up its history in his own heart. He did not love her, for he could as yet love no one, but he had the interest that a tender brother might feel towards a broken sister. He remembered his religious, remorseless wife, and how he had flung his own heart against her strong nature, as the yielding surf beats against the boulders in vain to move the impediment. So must this woman have beaten upon the iron nature the warm waves of her passion until the tide went down, and lay still after the storm of love was past.

He was a disappointed and lonely man, she was a disappointed and lonely woman. Neither of them had

life enough yet to appreciate or ask for sympathy. Both had the past memories, cravings and dead passions to separate them. They could never again love as they had loved. A man and a woman had put out that flame. They were both patient and sober. This friendship, if even they were friends, could only be the friendship of the dead and buried.

CHAPTER III.

THE OCEAN LINER.

CAPTAIN NELSON was a man well fitted for his post, and one not easily moved. He had served his time in the royal navy, and was now well advanced in years. Ruddy-faced, with short-cropped hair and moustache both white, which contrasted well with his red complexion, black eyebrows and jetty eyes, he looked like a French general. He was an able commander, and insisted on rigid discipline from his subordinates, yet was jovial and courteous when off duty with his male passengers, and gallant to the fair sex. He had sailed the seas so often in the service of the company who owned this fine new vessel that it took some time to make him the least uneasy respecting this dynamitard scare, and as he had no real grounds to interfere with the private property of the passengers, he did his best to inspire his guests with confidence that all must go well. Yet he was not quite so tranquil as he appeared to be, for he, like the others, had read about the doings of the Anarchists on the Continent, and knew that no feat was too outrageous for them to contemplate.

The first officer was a most gentlemanly young fellow, who had served his time in the service and risen rapidly to his present position. His name was George Cox—tall, slender, good-looking, and about thirty-two years of

age, he was a first-rate sailor and a general favourite with the ladies.

The second officer had not so much to commend him except his seamanship. He knew his business thoroughly, but in manner he was far from being agreeable, and in personal appearance decidedly unprepossessing. His eyes were the worst features about him, for they were positively ferocious in their glare—sullen blue and brown speckled eyes that lighted now and then with a savage gleam that resembled those of a maniac. He had been dismissed from several companies for the violence of his temper, yet, being backed by influence, had secured his present post. He was a powerfully built man of about forty, with dark hair and beard, while a livid scar which spread across his left cheek and nose, helped the sinister appearance of his eyes. His name was Digby Butcher.

The third and fourth officers were nice young men, who had been trained to make themselves agreeable when off duty, and enjoyed their occupation immensely.

The doctor was an unfortunate individual who had rested content too long in the light and not too dignified position of ship doctor, which does very well for young men as a relaxation after they have taken their degrees and before they have secured a practice, but which becomes most demoralising if continued more than a year or two. Young men, who like work and are ambitious to get on, learn this life as quickly as they can, or else they fall out of the ranks and become useless.

Dr Valentine Chiver had been in the service for twenty-five years, and had now become a fixture. In his youthful and dapper days, for he was of the diminutive order, he had gone to the sea for the sole

purpose of picking up an heiress. He was after that illusive pursuit still, with less chance than ever of hooking her.

At the age of twenty-three (he was forty-eight now and rotund), he might have had a prospect of settling himself in life, had he not been too exacting in his demands, for women have a weakness towards doctors and parsons, and he had his chances with the elderly spinsters and widows, towards Hymen inclined, and nearly all sentimental, who are to be met going out or coming home, but like most miniature men, he thought no small beer of his attractions, and put a high market value on them.

At twenty-three he had been slender, small-waisted, and possibly lively, with sparkling black eyes, white teeth, and doll-like hands and feet, neat in his get-up, as if he had come out of a band-box—a little darling of a doctor, in fact, he must have been then, full of the latest conceits of his profession, and fresh-coloured, for he had never worked very hard at college nor taken higher honours than were needful to slip him through.

At forty-eight he still retained his doll-like hands and feet, but with twenty-five years' steady indulgence at the lavish tables provided by the company, no proper exercise and no brain efforts, he had grown bilious-eyed, pasty-cheeked, pot-bellied, and when he walked, waddled like a swan who was taking a promenade; his medical knowledge was a quarter of a century behind date, and he yet aspired to youth, beauty and wealth in his life partner, hence Mr Valentine Chiver was still a bachelor.

He was dull as ditch-water in his conversation; his eyes were like those of a robin redbreast in shape, only without the sparkle; he sighed often, as people suffering

from indigestion or love are apt to do, and yet was as confident that the bright, young, wealthy heiress would yet fall at his feet as he had been, when he first started on his quest after the golden fleece. He was known all over the service as the "Lone Valentine," for he was not at all reticent as to his ultimate hopes and aspirations, and the young sparks enjoyed leading him on. Very little amuses people who are confined together, ruthless and cynical villains, from whom no breadth or fineness of humour was ever known to extract a smile while in a state of liberty, have been known to giggle as hysterically as tender school girls over a jest as innocent as small when they were in durance vile. On board ship the wit is not as a rule over scintillating, the food being on too lavish a scale for the encouragement of refined satire, yet the indulgence which dulls this sense of humour also blunts the critical faculties, so that the "Lone Valentine" passed muster for a good piece of humour, and the owner of that pretty title for a first-class butt to practise practical jokes upon.

It would be superfluous and boring to describe passenger life on board an ocean liner, as all the world and his spouse have experienced it for themselves. The *Rockhampton*, having the latest improvements inside and out, differed only from other ships by being a few degrees more luxurious and ornate.

To the very few who have not gone the grand tour we would say, recall the most sumptuous hotel or palace you have ever been in, imagine a scene out of the *Arabian Nights*, with the richest of carved pillars, cornices, ceilings and panels, white enamelled and hatched with gold, the daintiest and softest of cushioned seats, radiant with fairy globes of electric light toned down to a subdued lustre. This was

the dining saloon, capable of seating four hundred guests with ease.

- . The music saloon was a gorgeous chamber of carved walnut panelled walls, and arranged like a conservatory with palm and fern trees. The smoke-room was a marble and gold hall, specially adapted to the comfort of the devotees of the Goddess Nicotine, particularly stited with its cool slabs for the Tropics.

The gangways ran without partitions between the saloon and the second cabin, and from there to the steward and seamen's quarters, thus the second passengers occupied the point of vantage between the employees and the saloon passengers ; in fact, although fewer in number, they commanded the ship, and it was this portion that the suspected passengers at present occupied.

Down below, vast hordes of firemen, stokers, and engineers worked in an atmosphere of heat and suffocating closeness, that to outsiders it was hardly possible for suffering humanity to exist. Many died from heat-apoplexy each voyage these ocean liners made. Half a dozen men had already been carried up and flung overboard since the vessel had left port—Africans these were, so that little heed was paid to them. No European could have existed in these nethermost hells, where, like swart demons, the black men worked in a state of nakedness. Upstairs all was luxury and comfort, down here all was misery and suffering, still the pistons drove up and down, and the fairy globes of light shone soft and steadfast, while the fear that gripped at the hearts of the luxury-lapped ones also tugged at the vitals of the wretched slaves below.

Viewing the modern ironclad, whether destined for war, freightage or transfer, the romancist and artist,

who have filled their fancy with the images of the ships that sailed into Trafalgar Bay, must be as much disappointed as the weak-kneed disciple of Ruskin when looking at a spreading railway line with its boundary of telegraph posts. Still, to those who may be just as artistic in their instincts, yet born to the use of these iron innovations, there is a fascination in the symmetry of perfect subtile lines with the mighty force suggested; and to carry one's imaginations back to the days of mail-covered warriors, there is much the same stiffness in the ship or the steam-engine as there must have been about the iron-clad knight of old.

The *Rockhampton* resembled a perfect lady, in so much that she did not ostentatiously display her riches, but looked plain, yet well-dressed, from the distance, her black hull, with its delicious, long-reaching lines and delicate curves. A bungler of a draughtsman might reproduce something which would resemble the *Temeraire*, and granting him the colour sense which the poetic Turner had, he would debauch the most critical into admiration of his failure, but only the most highly-educated of draughtsmen could have caught those graceful sweeps as she parted the waves, and left that creamy furrow behind her. She was a rock for steadiness, a leviathan for size and strength, a perfect prude for decorum, a nymph of Diana for grace, and an Atalanta for speed.

The blue waves, with their snowy crests, lapped round her scarlet water-line, which appeared like the glowing petticoat of a sedate beauty of modern times, while over it the dark hull looked like the clinging black robe which has superseded the flounces and furbelows of past modern fashion. It was a loveli-

ness that required a refined education to appreciate, yet a loveliness unmistakable, for it owed nothing to superfluity, which is the weakness of mediocrity.

All was in harmony, the massive funnels, which relieved the more massive hull, the tower-like engine-rooms, the hurricane decks and deck houses, the mighty screw, which champed and churned the waters, the graceful bows, masts and yards, which looked like useless but ornamental head-gear, yet were placed for use if required. When the modern ironclad ship is depicted properly, and also the steam-engine, with its steel lines and telegraph posts, the most faddish of critics will have to sink into silence, or else admire.

Look at the aspect of modesty and reserve the ship has as she lies broadside on the waters, with the gentle backward lean of her masts and funnels, but see her coming on fore-shortened like indomitable and resistless fate, watch the engine sweeping, as never eagle swooped or skater sped, along those glittering lines with those streamers of clouds behind; the valleys are filled with the backward-cast vapours which curl about the cliffs, upstarting boulders, furze bushes and forests, while the fierce dragon rushes on with its jointed body and tail, quivering and undulating.

When the painter gives us that living monster, with the effect of its vibrations and that mystery of cloud behind, we defy the critic to say that the landscape is not the better for this innovation of vitality and force into its former stagnation. It is like God's voice bidding sleeping Nature wake up from the torpor of centuries, it is soul-thrilling, it is vital, but it requires art to depict it, and robust minds to appreciate it, not *dilettanti*, who may worship the baldness of a

Botticelli's and shudder at the cleanness and subtilty of those railway lines, or the exquisite sweep of an iron-clad ocean packet.

Through the Bay of Biscay they had glided when it raged its fiercest, while the vessel hardly quivered. The passengers saw other three-masted ships bob up and down, and the sight of those madly-tossed vessels made some of the timid ones fancy they were going to be seasick, but they could not keep up the notion, for they were as steady as if they had watched the tempest from a granite built pier, only for the heart-like throbbing of that underground machinery, which beat in unison with their ever-throbbing pulses. Then came the balmy summer as they slid along the Spanish coast, when the clean decks invited all to lounge and dream.

Gibraltar, Malta, Port Said and Suez passed before them like the gay scenes of a panorama being unrolled. They had now become accustomed to the beating of that mighty protecting heart, so that when it stopped at these ports of call they seemed to have missed the breathing of a friend, and longed to hear it begin again. They felt gay while the heart beat, and almost desolate when it stopped, for many were making friends, and this made them think about the final stopping, when they would have to part and separate.

They were one family now, isolated from the rest of the world, and, like the insects whose existence terminates within the hour, they were disposed to live fast. Friendship was not an affair of slow growth, it blossomed and ripened rapidly. Sentiment burst forth at a touch or a glance, and situations which might have seemed ridiculous on shore, appeared only natural here, where the seasons changed like magic.

Before this vague scare had come to frighten the fugi-

tive insects, there had been a deal of love-making and mutual confidences, for with that perpetual movement of the engines reading was almost impossible, and the most morose of solitaires could not keep their neighbours at bay. From the early morning, when the steward placed coffee, tea or cocoa, with fruit at their bedsides, to the last witching hour, when the lights were extinguished, they were together, with a balmy atmosphere around them, and the clusters of lustrous stars overhead, all inviting them to forget the past and the future, and live for the present only.

It was comic to see the gentlemen in the early morning, in their pyjamas and togas of bath towels, promenading the decks, and passing the fair companions of the night before, coming from, or going to the baths, with their dishevelled tresses flying loosely, and their light robes hardly covering them. Ship etiquette compelled the sexes to ignore each other at this hour, yet glances were stolen which would be remembered afterwards, and which would ripen the romantic interest of the night before.

The officers, as they generally did each voyage, made the swiftest headway in the good graces of the ladies. The first officer, George Cox, had found his affinity in a gentle-voiced, fair-haired, sweet young maiden of fifteen, and he was desperately in love. The piratical-looking Digby Butcher had also been picked up by a bold, tall and well-developed syren of thirty-five, who evidently had strong tastes, for she waylaid him at every free moment. The others were similarly occupied, while the good-natured captain walked about with a blind eye to these amorous proceedings.

Dr Valentine Chiver was perhaps the only single man who could not make up his mind, but that had been

his drawback all his life. There were young enough and pretty enough girls on board, some of them known to be wealthy, but somehow these did not incline towards his ponderous attentions ; the doubtful ones he fought shy of. Poor Chivers, he seemed doomed to a life of celibacy.

CHAPTER IV.

DR FERNANDEZ.

LIFE went on in a very methodical way on board, and the passengers were being fed up and cared for as if they had been prize cattle intended for the colonial markets. Early coffee, the bath, breakfast, a forenoon of basking on deck, varied with a few games, tiffin, followed by an afternoon of the same sort, with tea, then an aldermanic feast which occupied two hours, and then soft gaspings, until the food was digested enough to permit them to sleep or think over how far they had committed themselves.

Philip Mortlake attached himself in a quiet way to Mrs Austin. He had discovered that her Christian name was Adela, which he liked, for she appeared like a princess to him, if a wearied one. In his present condition, only the company of a woman could console and harmonise with him. A woman had wronged and outraged him, breaking to pieces all that he revered in life, and the cure and rebuilding must come from a woman. Perhaps Adela felt the same. Through life we are like magnetic atoms, attracted or repelled by different influences. The stormy winds of destiny drive us along separately until we touch our attractions, and then we must cling and move along together. They sat near each other, or walked calmly side by side, giving no

confidences and asking none, conversing on indifferent or commonplace topics, or gazing silently on the passing effects of sky and ocean, yet he felt more tranquil and she looked happier. They had become friends without words, and the others left them to themselves.

He had spoken to her about the subject which filled all minds, and she received his communication quietly. It might be true, or it might not. They had no means of proving, for the second-cabin passengers seldom saw the saloon class, and then only at a distance. They both watched the sallow or swarthy-visaged suspected ones as they smoked their cigarettes on their appointed promenade.

"What do you think they want, Mr Mortlake?" she inquired calmly.

"It is difficult to say," he replied. "To terrorise Europe has been their principal aim, and yet to wipe a ship like this out of existence could hardly effect their purpose, for the world would never learn our fate; therefore the sacrifice of their own lives would be labour lost."

"Perhaps they require the ship."

"That is more likely to be their intention, if they have any at all; and in that case I suppose they would set us ashore somewhere, if we yielded quietly."

"Is the captain likely to yield?"

"Decidedly not, if I am any judge of faces; he is a true British bull dog."

"And you?"

"I would side with the captain, of course," Philip replied, meeting her quick upward glance, and wondering why she had looked at him.

"For my own part," she continued, "I do not feel much concern about this so-called plot, whether we are

blown up or landed on a desert island. In the first place there will be an end, in the other only a continuation."

She did not add—"of misery"; but her companion comprehended her meaning. For a moment or two both looked towards the horizon, for it was not yet quite dark, and then Philip said with a slight laugh,—

"It ought to mean something for most people; I suppose it does to nearly all who are here at present, to judge from the general air of disquiet which pervades."

"Does it mean much to you at present?"

It was too dark now to see her face, but he answered her promptly.

"Frankly, Mrs Austin, I do not think it does;—of course, not knowing how fate may come, or when, I can sympathise with the poor Csar of Russia"

"It must be awkward to be a Csar nowadays," she said lightly.

"I would not take the post even although I could."

"Nor do I fancy any man in his senses would," she replied. "The honour, if it is an honour, is not worth the anxiety and peril."

It was half-past eight now, and the bell had just been struck. Above them the sky was studded with stars and planets, all glowing with tropical brightness, the electric lights shone through the music-room windows, where one lady was playing to another's singing. It was a Jewess who was entertaining the company with her voice, which was a rich contralto, and the song was one of the latest and most sentimental. On the decks the groups had gathered and arranged themselves for the usual flirtations, and beyond, on the second-class deck, scattered groups could be seen.

Over the ship's side the phosphorescent flashes burnt

like blue flames, away over the lea the ocean spread blackly towards the dusky green horizon, whilst the soft night air whispered amongst the shrouds.

All at once, as if the sounding of the bell had been a signal, that vibration of the vessel, with the muffled thudding of the pistons, stopped suddenly, and the *Rockhampton* came to a standstill, while what had been a wind before fell away to a dead calm, and as this stillness came upon them they saw the electric globes suddenly grow dim and disappear ; they were in darkness, save for the oil lamp that swung above the bell.

"It has come," said Adela Austin, as instinctively she clutched hold of Philip's arm, while at the same moment shrieks rose from the deck and music-room.

"Come down to the saloon, Mrs Austin, I can guide you safely there ; it may only be a temporary stoppage of the machinery, and the stewards will get us lights."

"Yes, that may be so," she replied gently. "You will stay beside me, Mr Mortlake."

"Yes," he answered briefly, and together they groped their way towards where they had so lately dined, amid a rush of the excited passengers.

It was eerie to stand in the darkness amongst that shrieking and unknown mass of humanity until the lights came, with the awful uncertainty of what was to happen next, yet Philip could not feel any trembling of the arm that now held his, and he was too content with the proximity to have space for fear. Another moment and the explosion might come, yet they were together, and that seemed enough for him now or hereafter.

Yet it took some resolution to keep cool in the midst of that wild stampede and confusion of sounds, for the terror that had possessed them, and which they had

tried to conceal, now tore away all the barriers and sophistries of civilisation. Men cursed and howled as they scrambled about over the swooning bodies in their way, and roared for light; women whimpered, shrieked madly, or tumbled down in dead faints. Philip felt, as he harkened to the babel round him, that his species were not elevating likenesses of the Creator.

By and by lights could be seen coming along the passages, borne by the miserable and quaking stewards, then the tumult subsided sufficiently for the captain's voice to be heard giving his orders, and next moment he could be seen standing with his second officer, Mr Butcher, in the companion way.

"Keep cool, ladies and gentlemen," the commander shouted in a cheery voice. "There is not the slightest danger—not the slightest danger, I can assure you."

"Why, then, have the lights gone out and the engines stopped?" inquired some of the male passengers, while the ladies began to pull themselves together.

"We shall find that out presently. I have sent for the chief engineer, who will, no doubt, explain the mishap to your complete satisfaction."

The captain and the mate sat down at one of the tables where the few lamps and candles were placed, and the former began conversing in his customary tones to those who were nearest to him. He betrayed no anxiety nor haste as time passed on, and, the engineer remained still absent.

"I expect he is busy getting things to rights," remarked the captain easily, as he gave an order to Mr Butcher, who rose and went on deck.

The passengers were now beginning to find seats for themselves, encouraged by the easy demeanour of the captain, who appeared to be quite content to sit and

wait, although each moment of delay meant wasted gold to his owners. He was saying,—

“Five years ago we had a similar stoppage about this very part of the voyage, on the first long trip of the *Empire*, which delayed us five hours, yet we were able to make it up before reaching King George’s Sound. It was nothing but the extra caution of the engineer on that occasion, as new machinery has to be humoured as well as new wives.”

As he made this small joke, seeing that peace and order had been restored, the captain rose with a general smile around the company, and left the saloon.

With the half-dozen oil lanterns which the stewards had placed at equal distances from each other on the tables, the effect was gloomy in the extreme in that richly-decorated saloon, where huge masses of shadow lay along the sides and corners. The passengers also, though tranquillised considerably, had by no means got over their vague fears, and now appeared disposed to venture on the deck. They gathered round the tables, and ordered drinks, which the stewards, also very silent, placed before them, trying to get up a kind of Dutch courage.

Philip Mortlake led Mrs Austin to one of the side couches, and sat down beside her. As he looked at her face, he saw that the weariness seemed to have left it. There appeared a flush on her cheeks, and her eyes were brighter; altogether she looked as if ten years had rolled away, at which he wondered.

“The captain is a brave man,” she murmured to her companion in tones meant only for his ears.

“Do you think, then, that there is more in this than he has explained?”

“I know it,” she replied; “and so does he and his officers; see what the stewards are bringing in.”

He looked round him, and noticed that the stewards were carrying in, besides more lights, a number of packages from the pantry, which they placed in out-of-the-way corners as quietly as they could, cases of wines and spirits, also hampers of provisions and dishes. They were in full force, a few waiting at the tables, and the rest coming and going constantly.

On deck he could hear a trampling and hauling about of heavy articles, as if the seamen were working hard. This could be the more easily heard as the ship lay so still, and silence reigned at the fore part of her. He missed, also, the half-dozen of dark-complexioned gentlemen who had been located before this in the saloon end. He wanted no more proofs to convince him that the ship had been captured, and that the captain was making his preparations for an attack or a siege.

He remembered her words, "It has come," and turned his gaze once more upon her keenly—who was she, and how could she grasp this situation so quickly and without trembling?

"Yes, Mr Mortlake, I have made my choice to die with you, if it must be so, rather than live any longer with murderers," she said gently, in answer to his look.

"Then you knew of this before?"

"I suspected it," she replied; and then, after a pause, she continued in a whisper,—*"Listen to me quietly for a few moments while I explain to you my position. I think I owe you that, for your kindness to me, for when people are as close to death as we are at present, reserve is out of the question."*

He thrilled as he felt her warm breath on his ear; he did not know whether with a dawning passion or with sudden fear, yet outwardly he remained calm, and only nodded his head to signify that he was listening.

"My maiden name was Austin, my married name Fernandez. Dr Fernandez is my husband, whom, doubtless, you have heard about."

He started as he heard this dreaded name of the notorious Anarchist inventor of infernal machines. Who had not heard about the hellish actions of this man?

"Yes," she continued bitterly, "my husband bears a well-known name, and when I tell you that he is on board this ship with a picked band of Anarchists, also that he was one of the saloon passengers, you will perhaps understand why I could not speak before."

"Yes, I suppose so," he said softly. "Which of the passengers was the doctor? for I saw no one speak to you during the voyage."

"The tall, thin man, whom they call Mr Faria, is my husband. He has left us, you see, and joined his companions. He has watched me closely during the voyage, but has now left me at last at liberty."

"What a terrible fate to be linked to such a demon."

"Yes, it has been a terrible fate since I found him out; so terrible that the prospect of death seems pleasant compared to it. I have been watched and carried about with him and his companions for the past six years, forced to see the most atrocious crimes perpetrated and unable to utter a word of warning. That is my secret, Mr Mortlake."

"But could you not have given me a hint before we reached Malta or Ceylon?"

"I have given you as many as I dared. Did I not advise you to see more of Ceylon while we were there?"

"I could not leave you," blurted out poor Philip impulsively.

"I knew that, my friend, and so did my husband. Ah! it is useless for two people placed as we now are

to play the hypocrite. I saw that you were nearly as world-weary as I am, and my heart went out to you in sympathy when I first met you, although I could not show it, for, as I have told you, I was very closely watched and environed; besides, a plainer warning would have only hastened on your doom, for my husband allows no one whom he suspects, to escape. At Gibraltar, Malta, Port Said, Suez and Colombo they were prepared to blow up the ship at a moment."

Philip was thrilling still, but no longer with fear. The woman's soft whispering had entered his soul and filled it with a glow of ecstasy such as he had not felt since he was a boy. Death seemed to be nothing now while that ardour of life pulsed through him, and she sat so quietly, prepared to share that fate beside him. It was not a question of love as men and women regard that passion. There was no desire for the body in his heart. A clearer flame burned now within him. It seemed as if their spirits had already leapt together and joined in an inseparable embrace. They were about to pass from this life which both had found so empty of pleasure and enter the other, like twin souls. He clasped the slender hand that lay supinely on her knee within his with a nervous grasp, and looked into her shining eyes with eyes as bright.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXPLOSION.

IN this way they sat together in silence for a time, listening to the sounds overhead, watching the movements of the stewards and the passengers, who, seeing that no immediate catastrophe had taken place, were recovering their spirits. The ladies were partaking of tea, coffee or wine, the gentlemen of Scotch whisky or brandy with soda. The unusual scare had made them all fly to extra indulgence on this night, and until the cause of the stoppage was explained no one cared to face the darkness of the deck. They were able to laugh now at the absurd idea of being frightened over this very natural accident, yet for the present they preferred company.

Philip saw that the stewards and Dr Valentine Chiver were so far in the secret, for they moved about pallid-faced and with staring eyes, walking gingerly, and casting down the dark gangway terrified glances ; while he, the poor, little, fat Lothario, sat limp and grey in his seat, the picture of misery. He was drinking whisky as if it had been water, with his beady orbs glaring wildly. No one spoke to him, or else a second panic must have set in ; also, fortunately for their peace of mind, few looked at him, while as for him his powers of speech were frozen. He could only swallow the fiery liquid before him.

"Do you know what they intend to do? Mrs—let me call you Adela now."

"Yes, Philip, I prefer my Christian name from *you* now," she replied quietly, permitting him to hold her hand.

"They will try to take the ship without injuring her in any way, if they can, for they mean to make use of her in some way as a cargo, transport and war ship. The doctor has made his plans, and fixed upon an island out of the line of traffic, where he can found a colony of Anarchists and manufacture his explosives. But one thing make sure of, from my experience of him and his companions, they will not spare the life of a man or woman who is not of their diabolical society. They will kill us whether we resist or yield."

"Then we will fight—but you, Adela, will your husband not make an effort to save your life?"

"No; he himself sentenced me to death before I left England. I was the means of preventing an outrage there, and did it with my eyes open to the consequences; but I was weary of my life and wished it ended. He hates and dreads me now, I think, as bitterly as I do him."

"How do you think they will slay us?"

"Ah! my husband is a master at ingenious methods of settling this problem. He may poison the atmosphere and suffocate us, or he may, if hurried, shatter us with explosives. We shall soon know now, for here comes the captain."

Philip pondered for a moment while Captain Nelson entered, followed by his officers and five seamen laden with arms, which they put without ceremony down upon the table—the time for further concealment had gone past.

Philip thought, should he warn these people, or rather

announce to them that they were doomed, or would it not be more merciful to leave them as they were, as the Creator leaves his creatures uncertain and ignorant. The plan of the Creator seemed the best, therefore he remained by the side of his friend and watched what was going on.

"Shut and barricade these doors," said the captain in a steady voice, as if the order had been an ordinary one; then, while the stewards obeyed him, and the passengers looked up startled, he continued,— "Ladies and gentlemen, the accident is a little more serious than we at first supposed, and will probably delay us a little longer; in fact, we had better remain here until daylight, when we can better see how to mend matters."

"Oh, captain, is the ship a wreck? Is she going to sink? What is it?" shrieked out a chorus of voices, when the captain held up his hands for silence.

"There is no danger to the ship at present. Everything about her is taut and in good order, only that she has changed hands and is for the present in the possession of a horde of pirates."

Another confusion of tongues rose at this point, which the captain allowed patiently to subside before he continued.

"Of course, it is ridiculous for any except madmen to entertain the thought that they can keep possession of a ship like this for longer than a few hours. At the present they have the advantage of the darkness, and as it is my duty not to risk any damage to the vessel and passengers under my care, I think it best to submit to the delay for a few hours, for that will be all, let me assure you, that can possibly happen to us. I have taken all precautions. On deck the guns are in order and the

ammunition ready, to send those who will not submit to kingdom come. Here are weapons enough for the gentlemen who like, to arm themselves to the teeth—rifles, revolvers, cutlasses, dirks—although we sha’n’t want to use them, I can assure you, on the word of an old naval man !”

“Have you made any advance towards the—the pirates?” asked one gentleman gifted with more self-command than the others, who looked as if a single man with a revolver could have mastered them easily.

“Yes, I have sent three messengers to them to ask what they mean?”

“And what answer have they given?”

“None as yet ; indeed neither of my messengers have come back, nor have the engineers turned up to explain, and I don’t wish to weaken our force by sending any more. Our policy is to wait, and enjoy ourselves as best we may.”

“How can we enjoy ourselves with a set of explosive Anarchists on board?” cried out the passengers in tones of the extremest anguish.

“Oh ! Anarchists think as much of their own carcases as we do about ours, and no explosion can take place on board without equal risks to both parties.”

“Oh, but you know, captain, that Anarchists enjoy dying if they can kill others !” cried out one young lady.

“Not they—besides, we are not blown up yet, nor likely to be !” replied the captain stoutly. “Keep yourselves cool, that is all.”

Good advice this, that, like heaps of other advice, was extremely difficult to take.

The ladies took straightway to the couches, there to whimper and moan out their fears, while the men tried to comfort them as well as they could, oscillating between the spirits and the sofas.

Thus the first hour passed, while the captain sat steadily at the table, where the weapons were placed, and waited.

Adela Austin or Fernandez expressed herself as tired, and therefore stretched herself out on the couch, while Philip wrapped her well up about the limbs, for although the night was a warm one, a sudden exclusiveness made him cover her feet.

She now permitted him to do as he pleased with her. He was her last friend, both waiting by the brink of the dark river, both waiting the shock which would sever the links that the world had forged about them. She knew that he had been a married man—men, as well as women, carry that sign about them. She did not know the story of his misery as he did hers; she would learn it when they had crossed over the river. He was not the sort of man to attract women who indulged in romantic dreams. He was old and *passé*, but sorrow and disappointment had rendered her short-sighted to the physical, and she felt contented that he cared enough for her company not to regret dying with her. It made death pleasanter to contemplate with him beside her. It was not so lonely as going out alone, or with a crowd of frivolous and stranger spirits.

“Do you wish to sleep, Adela?” asked Philip, as he wrapped her round.

“No, Philip, we shall have time enough for that presently. Hold my hand, if you like to do so; I like it so.”

He half sat, half lay on the ground at her side, with his head on the cushions upon which she reclined, and still held her hand, no one heeding them.

She was thinking,—“I wonder where spirits go to after they are liberated from the body. Those that

have friends and homes ought to go back. I have no friends and no home, therefore I shall have to find a place for myself." She was not feeling lonely with that firm hand holding hers. If she had been going to live on this earth, she might have felt it wrong to cling to that hand, but when one is about to die it is different. Her husband had cast her off, and death was about to give her back her liberty. How blessed an assurance that was of Christ's, that there would be no marriages in the land she was about to enter—friendships, perhaps, and freedom.

He was thinking also, with that slender hand in his. As people are said to see a panorama of their past lives rise up before them at the hour of death, he saw his unroll. The love of his boyhood flashed out. How he had loved that wife of his! Never had he been false to her, although her savage jealousy had deemed him so. She had been his idol, his goddess of clay. Then the bitterness of the years passed, when, out of despair, he bore the blame, and allowed her to defame him. She was praying, possibly, at that moment—thinking how good she was, how worthy of heaven in discarding him, for, to her ailing imagination, he would always appear a monster of evil. His love lay buried long ago. She had heaped upon it a mountain of ashes and ignominy. Living, he would be nothing to her; dead, he would himself feel free.

The little hand in his was that of a tired-out child, towards whom he had to act the elder brother's part. They would both go through the river together—where?

Portions of the *Beatus Vir* came into his mind now, and it comforted him:—

"Acceptable is the man who is merciful and lendeth ;

he shall order his works with judgment, for he shall not be moved for ever.

“The just man shall be in everlasting remembrance ; he shall not be afraid of evil report.

“He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor, his justice endureth for ever and ever.”

Yes, he had done his best to be merciful and just, and he had dispersed abroad, and now he did not mind evil reports, for he would soon be past all that, and with her whom death had made his friend for ever and ever. It was not hard to die when he had renounced the events of his life ; not hard even if he had gone alone—a boon to go with such a friend.

He had seen a man once killed suddenly in the full flush of health and joy. This young man had been laughing and jesting with a girl when the stroke fell which killed him. His laughing face was turned towards her as he fell and rolled over, a corpse with the smile still on his lips. That young man had found it easy to go. Perhaps his experience would be a similar one.

He glanced towards the captain and the men who stood around him. They did not know the remorseless fiends who had captured the *Rockhampton* or they might not have waited so calmly on their coming.

“Philip, my friend,” murmured the soft voice at his ear.

“Yes,” replied Philip.

“Are you going to fight when they come ?”

“Of course. I could not do less, as an Englishman.”

“Ah, then, we shall be parted at the last.”

She sighed gently as she spoke, a sigh that filled him with delight.

"Only for a moment, Adela, and then I shall take hold of your hand again."

"Are you sure of this, Philip? What if it be annihilation?"

"Comfort yourself, my child, we will meet again," he said, as he clasped her hand with his one hand, while he smoothed her hair with the other, and she appeared to be content.

Another half-hour passed with that deep silence all round them. The port-holes were open, and the soft sighing of the night breeze came through them. A gentle swell was on the sea, which lifted the inactive ship up and down softly and soothingly.

Just then a knock came to the locked saloon door, and the captain, seizing up a revolver, went towards it and opened it, admitting one person only, one of the foreign saloon passengers—a yellow-faced squat man. He was well-dressed, and yet like a workman, with a most sinister cast of face, yet bold enough, as he entered and looked about him.

"Good-night, capitan. Why locked doors to your passengers?"

"Your friends ought to know that," replied the captain sternly. "Do you come from them?"

"Yus; since you put it in that nice way, capitan. I am the ambassador; depending upon your honour as a gentleman."

"Oh, we won't harm you. What do they want?"

"Not much; only the ship, which the cause has need of," replied the ambassador, with a grin.

"Oh, indeed, the request is a modest one, as far as your usual demands; yet, what if I refuse?"

"We shall kill you within an hour's time, capitan, and then the ship will be ours."

"Not if we know it. Go back to your friends, Mr Gascoyne, and tell them I am in no great hurry between this and daybreak. Yet, if they put off until that hour their submission, I'll treat them as pirates, and shoot them down to a man."

"I shall give your message, capitan, only I think you are not wise ; but I say nothing. You are well armed here, I see."

He lifted a long dagger from the table as he spoke, and felt its point with his thumb as he looked about him curiously.

"Yes ; we are able to defend ourselves," replied the captain. "I am sorry to see you in this position, Mr Gascoyne."

"So am I, capitan, and sincerely wish it could be avoided. I shall do my best to make my friends listen to reason, I assure you."

He bowed, and turned to go, still holding the dagger in his hand. As he passed by where Philip and Adela were, he said,—

"Madam ! would you not like to come on deck ?"

"No !" replied Adela shortly, as she turned her face from him with aversion.

"As you please. Ah, sir," he said, bending over Philip, "I wish you could persuade the brave capitan to yield to destiny ; the ship is ours, and we have better weapons than this at our command."

As he spoke he touched Philip in the side with the sharp-pointed dagger. It was a light pressure, yet he felt it pricking his skin, just over the heart, through his thin flannel shirt.

"A prog with this just there, and you'd be done for ; yet, bah ! that would only be one, whereas with our weapons—poof ! and the lot goes."

"That is sharp enough for me," replied Philip, with a slight laugh, feeling how helpless his present position was, while a nightmare-like chill went over him and dewed his back with ice-drops, for he thought for a moment that the man had been ordered to slay him ; then the other also laughed and withdrew the blade.

"Au revoir ! I shall come again presently," said the man, as he drew himself up and went out, the captain locking the door behind him.

"Who is he ?" whispered Philip.

"My husband's confidant and friend. I thought he was going to stab you," answered Adela.

"So did I," replied Philip faintly, as he took out his handkerchief and wiped his damp brow.

It was becoming demoralising as well as maddening, this dallying with doom. Philip felt after that last experience that he must do something to assert his manhood and keep himself from becoming a coward.

"Adela, I can stand no more of this. I must ask the captain to begin the war ; forgive me if I leave you."

"As you like, Philip ; it cannot be long either way," replied Adela, as she released his hand and folded her own over her bosom.

"Captain Nelson," he cried, as he rose up with a leap and went to the table, "you don't know the men we have to deal with, that you wait here and allow them to mature their devilish plans. Let us make a rush at them instead."

He took up two revolvers as he spoke, and a cutlass, while the captain eyed him steadily.

"Yes ; perhaps you are right, Mr Mortlake. I am also getting a bit tired of the waiting game. Say, gentlemen, who volunteers for the charge ?"

A couple of the passengers seized upon arms with the

three officers and the old captain, and then with one accord they rushed to the locked door.

"We'll interview them now," cried the captain, as he unlocked the door and flung it open.

Philip was one step behind the captain as they made a plunge into the gloom of the gangway. He saw the captain take three steps, and then stop.

At the same instant a bright blaze like lightning flashed before his eyes, and then all became blank to him.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE HOLD.

PHILIP MORTLAKE raised himself from the floor on which he had been dashed down by the explosion, and looked about him for a moment stupidly.

He had fallen on a body from which the head had been torn and the limbs disjointed, while the clothes which had covered it were in tatters.

The saloon was in a state of wreckage, still filled with the smoke of the explosion, and all about him lay the dismembered bodies of the passengers. How he had escaped whole, for he felt no wounds about him, he could not tell.

His first thought on recovering consciousness was about Adela; had she escaped as he had done, or been mutilated like the others?

He ran over to the couch where she had been lying, and was overjoyed to find her rising to her feet with a dazed look in her eyes; she had evidently been thrown from the couch some distance away, for she rose from a mound of dead—a fearful mound of battered humanity, male and female, all mingled together. Fortunately for her she had been flung upon a woman's body, singularly like her own figure, whom he could not recognise, so fearfully was the face torn, yet it was costumed similarly to what Adela had been; but he thought nothing of

that as he rushed forward and clasped her in his arms with gratitude at her escape. She was his sole living charge, now that the others were slain.

He felt no wrong at embracing this wronged woman, now that the dastardly outrage had been perpetrated upon them. Her husband had given her over to death, and if she had escaped that was not his fault; she had taken the risk and passed through the punishment to which she had been condemned. She was no longer the property of Dr Fernandez the Anarchist. She was a virginal woman once more, and at liberty to bestow herself as she pleased.

The criminal who has served his sentence can no longer be regarded as a criminal, for he has paid his debt. The slave who yields up his life for his master has surely done with slavery. Sin brought death into the world, therefore, when the sinner dies, he has paid his debt of sin.

Philip Mortlake had these thoughts as he clasped Adela in his arms, as a brother might a sister. He was overjoyed to see her rise from the terrible shock unwounded, as he was, while all the others seemed to have been torn to pieces.

She looked wan and feeble at first. He felt himself in the same condition, but as the moments passed, the blood began to course once more through his veins as it had not done for many years. She also began to get more colour in her cheeks than she had before, and look younger. The shock must have stirred up their frozen blood and made it flow again with the freedom of youth.

What a wreck and shamble this handsomely-furnished room now was. The iron pillars were twisted in all directions, portions of the ceiling and floor gaped open and revealed a chasm of beams and ribs beneath, black

spaces that yawned under their feet, yet invited them to conceal themselves from the remorseless devils in human shape who would soon be after them.

He had no more recollection of the explosion than the memory of that vivid flash of light that had blinded him for an instant only. It could not have been longer, for the vapours still hung about the saloon, although there were gaps enough for them to escape quickly.

All round them lay bleeding and unrecognisable corpses, so that they shrank with horror as they stood together and looked round.

"We must conceal ourselves, Adela, and at once," he said, "for the assassins will be here presently to finish up their fell work."

"Yes, Philip, my friend ; strange as it may seem, I no longer desire to die," said Adela, as she clung to him. "A moment since it seems I was lying on yonder couch wishing for and waiting for death. I saw you pass the door, then the intense light burst out and blinded me, although I felt no pain, and then I looked up to see you standing beside me. Do you know, you appear to be years younger than when you left me? Why, your hair looks brown, instead of the grizzled grey it was a moment ago."

"So do you, Adela. It is because we know each other now and are liberated from the past."

"That must be it," she replied, and then added,—
"Let us hide, my friend, for I hear footsteps coming along the passage, and if we are discovered we shall be murdered."

"Don't leave me behind. Take me with you, for I am half dead with horror and drenched to the skin with ice-cold water."

The faint voice was unmistakably that of Dr Valentine

Chiver, and as they looked quickly round they saw him shivering, limp and colourless, with staring eyes, and hair and clothes dripping wet.

"Where have you come from in that state?" inquired Philip.

"I don't know. I cannot remember," said the poor fellow. "I was sitting at the table when it came, and when I woke up I saw the others rush away; but I had no place to go to, therefore I came to you."

"What others?" asked Philip astonished.

"The captain, the passengers," replied the doctor in a dull voice.

"But they have all been killed. Look at their bodies."

"I don't know who these bodies belong to; but *they* have hidden themselves, for I saw them rush away."

"Then let us follow their example if we mean to live, for the enemy is coming I can hear."

Saying which Philip took the hand of Adela, and followed by the miserable little wet and shivering ship doctor, crawled along a great iron beam that passed directly under their feet, where the torn-up floor left an open gap. A faint glimmering of red light came through the bars and beams from what appeared to be the distant engine-rooms, so that they could see to make their way a

They crawled on all-fours until they reached a portion where they were securely hidden by the deck that had not been damaged, and here they waited for the course of events.

They had not long to wait. Presently they heard voices above them, and trampling of feet.

"I don't expect that any mortal in the saloon has escaped my sudden-death explosive," said a voice above.

"That is my husband," whispered Adela to Philip.

"Was," answered Philip. "He can be no longer husband of yours."

"It is pretty effective this invention of yours, doctor," said another voice.

"Yes," replied the first voice. "I had no desire to inflict more pain than was needful for our purpose. Adela was a traitress, although she was only one of us through the link of matrimony, and therefore could not be judged with the same severity as we condemn traitors who give their bond, yet she had to die, therefore, for her sake, I rendered the fumes perfectly painless. The poor people here have gone without the slightest knowledge of how things went. It was a rapid passage and an easy one," said Doctor Fernandez quietly. "The forces of Nature were quenched *instantly*, and the spirits were freed without a single pang. No one could possibly have escaped."

"Are you certain of this, doctor?" asked the other voice.

"Certain, my friend. The fumes are so volatile that they spread instantly, the moment the bomb has exploded, and evaporate as quickly, after they have done their work. I have allowed thirty minutes to elapse before I brought you here. Ten minutes would have been sufficient, yet I did not wish to endanger the valuable lives of my *confreres*, therefore I have made you pause before advancing for thirty minutes exactly."

"Then you think no one has escaped," inquired the voice.

"Certainly not," said the doctor. "Here lies my poor wife, who would take sides against me. She is not much mutilated, poor thing. To-morrow we will bury the dead."

"He thinks I am slain," whispered Adela. "He has seen a body like mine. I saw one also that was like me as I rose. It is as well that he should think me dead."

Her voice trembled slightly as she whispered this to her friend. It is not nice to think that the best thing to happen to ourselves is death. People often say that they wish they were dead, yet few of them desire it in reality.

Again the voice of Dr Fernandez fell upon their ears.

"You are satisfied, comrades, with the work which has been accomplished, I trust. Not one of us has suffered by a single scratch. Not one of those whom we must consider enemies have escaped. We are masters of the position, owners of this mighty ship, which, I suppose, had better be set agoing again in our direction."

"We are satisfied with your work, doctor, and could not wish a better leader."

"No, comrades, I have no knowledge of the sea. Captain Anatole must take the command."

"I am willing," said a deep voice ; "and now go to choose my officers and men."

"When will we be ready to start?"

"Within half an hour we shall be on our way. My comrades are good sailors and good engineers. I suppose you will keep to the second saloon for the rest of the voyage, since this is so much damaged."

"Yes ; we can get this damage put to rights over there when we arrive."

Philip and his companions heard the miscreants walk off towards the other parts of the vessel, while they still remained crouched upon the iron beam, with the dark-

ness round them only dimly penetrated by that distant glimmering of crimson light.

"It is growing brighter ; it comes from below us," said Adela. "We cannot remain long here. Surely the ship cannot be on fire."

"No," replied Philip. "It is the engine fires, which they are stocking far below us. We are in a portion of the hold where possibly those others who have escaped are also concealed. Let us stay where we are for a little longer, until the ship gets up steam, then we shall be able to find shelter in some of the aft cabins."

"But they will search these cabins first."

"Yes ; that is probably what they are doing at present, and after they make an examination we shall be most likely left alone."

"How cold and damp it is down here," moaned poor Chiver, as he shuddered violently on his perch. "It seems as if the blood was dropping upon me like ice drops from the bodies who lie above. Oh, this is dreadful !"

"Don't speak in that way, Dr Chiver, you frighten me," and Adela crept nearer to Philip, who clasped her closely to him as he turned roughly on the miserable little medicus.

"Don't be a fool, Chiver. We have escaped the greatest danger ; keep quiet now and you'll be all right. We shall be able to find food enough, and after this night shelter also, if we don't lose our presence of mind. You have heard that they intend taking the vessel somewhere, so that there will be lots of chances for us to get ashore once we are there."

A long silence ensued after this, during which he held Adela, while the doctor sat beside them. For lack of a better occupation they watched that lurid reflec-

tion, now growing brighter as the furnace doors were opened, and then becoming dim again when the fires were stocked and the doors shut. A little longer and once more the old vibration began to pulsate through them, and the *Rockhampton* had started again upon her interrupted voyage, to where—it was impossible to calculate.

Philip hoped that they would go for some mainland ; they were not far from Africa. There were also islands to the south that they might make. It was all the wildest of speculation where they might be going, as the capture of the ship was the most improbable and unprecedented of actions. Whatever course they took, they would have to sail rapidly and out of the way of ordinary traffic in the meantime, whatever else they meant to do with their huge capture in the future.

“Yes, they must take us to some deserted portion of the coast, or to some island out of the way, which possibly they have decided upon beforehand ; therefore, if we keep out of their sight, we may soon be in a position to make our escape.”

As he was saying this softly, he could feel that the engines were in full action, while from the upper decks came the sounds of work. She was increasing her speed with every moment that passed, and the captors evidently knew what they were about.

Two hours passed without the silence being further broken by the three hidden ones. Adela sat so quietly against the arm of Philip that he thought she must have fallen asleep, and he therefore did not move, for fear of disturbing her. Indeed, now that the vessel was steaming on in her usual manner, he felt almost inclined to fall asleep, only for the memory of the horrors which lay

over their heads, with the darkness and danger of their present position.

It was not cold, yet cooler than it had been in the saloon. The air was filled too with the musty and varied odours of a ship's hold—new paint, engine-oil, and the other fumes which mingled, yet retained each their own peculiarity. The saloon above was dark now also, since the assassins had gone away—dark, still horribly suggestive of what it contained. It was not easy to fall asleep with this knowledge and that uncertainty.

“Are you asleep, my friend?” he asked softly, to which she answered, with her lips at his ear,—

“Hush! No, I am listening. Do you hear the noises around and below us, as of things moving cautiously?”

“It is the ship rats; there are always these vermin, even in a new ship,” he answered soothingly. “But they are well fed, and will not hurt us.”

“Ah! but hearken to the sounds above us—and see the lights coming this way! They have begun the search!”

“Yes,” muttered Philip, in a low voice. “We must keep silent and lie close.”

As he said this, a ship lamp was thrust down the opening of the torn-up deck, and a villainous face shone out above it, peering in their direction.

CHAPTER VII.

A GATHERING IN THE DARK.

As yet they had the advantage, for a number of cross iron bars flung a patchwork of shadow upon them where they sat, so that they could see without being seen, but for how long it was impossible to say.

Philip looked about him anxiously to find out where he was, and observed that the hold occupied the entire length of the saloon, and was fairly well and compactly packed, with luggage and freight. A few feet only separated them from the storage, therefore they were in no danger of hurting themselves by a fall.

"No one there, I think, Pedro?" asked a voice.

"I think not, but we may as well go and examine,"—saying which the man with the lamp leapt down upon a sea-chest, and was quickly followed by another, both armed with cutlasses and revolvers.

"Courage, dear Adela; I shall kill these two if they see us," whispered Philip between his teeth, while he felt for the weapons he had armed himself with at the first. He still had the pistols in his sash.

The two men stood for a moment swinging the lamp about, and throwing its rays in different directions, yet, where they were now, the shadow of the beam itself covered those upon it.

"Dr Fernandez was right, Pedro; there is not a liv-

ing enemy left on board. Let us return and finish our examination above."

Had they eyes in their heads, Philip thought, as he peered from his shelter. There, in the shadow of some bales, he saw the captain and his two mates, George Cox and Digby Butcher, both glaring with white and revengeful looks on these searchers as they retreated before them.

Other faces and forms were there, all seeking the shadows, yet whom Philip, from his elevated position, saw plainly enough, feeling pleased to think they were not quite alone, yet dreading that they might be discovered.

But no, the men looked round them seemingly keenly enough without seeing anything, and then they drew themselves through the hole, and slowly disappeared down the gangway, leaving the company once more in the hold.

"More have escaped beside ourselves, Adela. Let us join them and consult as to what is to be done."

"I am frightened of them, Philip," whispered Adela, with a strong shudder and a convulsive clutch at his arm.

"Why? They are like ourselves, and friends," said Philip, astonished.

"I don't know; but I saw faces down there when the lantern shone, which I saw lying dead upstairs."

"Nonsense! You only fancied so. They are all our friends, and will help us—come!"

She made no more objections, but permitted him to lift her down to the boxes after he had reached them himself. He had forgotten little Doctor Chiver, but that gentleman scrambled down after them, and stood beside them, grumbling to himself that he would certainly have rheumatics with all this wet upon him.

Scarcely had the party of three landed upon their feet, when a hand grasped the arm of Philip, and a voice breathed in his ear—the voice of the captain,—

“Hush! or they will hear us. Who are you?”

“Philip Mortlake.”

“And your companions?”

“Mrs Fer—I mean Austin, and the ship’s doctor, Valentine Chiver.”

“Well,” answered the captain, “I am happy that you have escaped with life. There are about a dozen of us down here. Are you wounded?”

“Not at all. I feel stiff and unstrung in the nerves, though.”

“So do we all; and no wonder, for it must have been a terrible smash up. Do you think it safe yet to venture about?”

“Yes; I was about to propose that to you, Captain Nelson; they must have finished the search amongst the cabin by this time.”

“The villains have set the ship going again. I wonder what they have done with Mr Gray, the chief engineer.”

“I am here, captain,” answered the voice of Mr Gray. “I was knocked down while on duty, but quickly recovered my senses and rushed to warn you, but before I could reach you the explosion had taken place, therefore I hid myself as you have done.”

“Mr Butcher, will you go up and see if the coast is clear, then we can all perhaps find more comfortable quarters for the night?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I suppose we shall have to lie low for a while, until we can find out what are their forces and how we can circumvent them.”

Their eyes, now well accustomed to the darkness, which was only rendered very slightly less intense by the distant reflections which stole through the bars, could distinguish the different figures as they crept cautiously up and stood together. As they considered it wisdom to remain quiet until Mr Butcher's return, they waited silently and with apprehension for a time until they heard his voice from above.

"You may come up," he said at last. "They are all in the other portions of the ship, and we have the saloon and aft cabins to ourselves and the killed."

One by one they crept up, horror being upon them all—a horror which demoralised them and sapped their courage as they touched with their feet or hands, when they stumbled, the stiffening bodies which lay so thickly between them and the aft doors of the saloon.

The electric wires from the steward's pantry had been broken or disturbed by the explosion, and only one dim lantern, evidently overlooked, still stood on the end table, but outside, on the gangway, the lamps were again glowing, which gave them all the light they required to grope along.

With the horror of the dead mingled the fear of the ruthless and seemingly all-powerful living upon them, they kept well within the shadows, avoiding both that dim lantern on the table, the light which streamed along the gangways, and the bodies amongst their feet. One after the other they crept along, looking fearfully behind them as they went, each suffering the terror of a nightmare.

Yet no one came to disturb them ; possibly even Anarchists dislike the proximity and sight of their victims after the deed is done. The gangways were clear as far as they could see. None of the usual bustle of stewards or cooks disturbed them. It was a lighted

death-ship, yet going along at full speed, with the engines alone seemingly alive.

The captain led the way in deep silence, nor did he speak until he had reached one of the state cabins, the door of which stood open, and into which he entered, the others following softly.

"You had better keep together, and rest here until I find out what is going on aboard," he said.

"Let me accompany you, captain," said Philip.

"Very well. Mr Butcher, come with us, while Mr Cox mounts guard here."

An intense weariness and utter lassitude had now fallen upon the passengers, so that with one accord they laid themselves anywhere—on the couches and the floor. They could not see each other, but that was no matter, since they were so close that they could feel the contact of their bodies, and that was, to an extent, some consolation in their misery.

Adela closed her eyes as Philip left her, and almost immediately lost all consciousness of her peril and surroundings; the others also began to breathe regularly around her.

"Gentlemen," said the captain, when the three had reached the companion steps, "remember that for the present we must control ourselves, and only watch. We must not be discovered. You will obey me in all things."

"Yes, we will obey you, sir."

"Good. Now follow me, and with great care."

It was now about the darkest hour of the night, that hour before the grey of dawn steals up from the east and dims the stars. As yet they were lustrous and bright in all their Oriental splendour, with the spaces between like ebony.

What a beautiful world it was, Philip thought, as he stepped on deck and felt the soft yet cool air fan his cheeks. He had been so near losing it. He had been so indifferent to it before—before that explosion had changed his feelings and made him so near to leaving it. Now it was his for a little longer.

The steamer rushed along like a thing of life, the wind sang through the cordage, the stars flashed above, while on the waters the phosphorescence burned and sparkled as the screw churned them up and left a glittering furrow behind.

Where they stood the deck was empty—not quite, for the body of the quartermaster lay upon his face, and as they moved along towards the bridge they saw several other corpses stretched stark and still. They had been taken by surprise and cut down as suddenly as the passengers had been below. Death had gleaned a rich harvest here.

On the bridge a man stood with his back to them. They could just make out the figure and no more. In the bridge-house a light was burning where the charts were, and they could make out other forms.

It was a risk to go on the bridge, where they could easily be seen by anyone on the foredeck, therefore they resisted the temptation and passed along on the darkest side, crouching down as they passed the lighted windows of the second-class smoking room. The windows being open, they could hear, from the voices, that it was occupied.

In this careful way they went from end to end of the ship, and then returned to where the voices and dense fumes of tobacco smoke showed that the assassins were congregated. They had the deck seemingly to themselves at this hour.

It was an easy matter to get upon the tafirail and, by crouching amongst the shrouds, be able to look through one of the open windows into the interior, and although it was not very dignified for the captain and second officer to do this on board their own ship, yet needs must when necessity compels, therefore, with one impulse, they climbed up, and keeping themselves well within the shadow, they gazed across the deck and into the apartment.

A dense blue film of smoke at first met their eyes and half-observed the people who were inside; but as they peered they at length distinguished the forms and faces dimly, as through a gauze curtain. The smoke-room was crowded with excited smokers, languid players of cards and dominoes, or Anarchists who had fallen asleep.

They were listening, those who played, to the talking of the chiefs, therefore their playing proceeded but indifferently, but all who were not asleep smoked diligently and helped to densify the haze.

Dr Andrew Fernandez had the head of the table, and he was speaking impressively and seriously, punctuating his words with much gesticulation, as is the manner with the best bred foreigners.

He had a finely-shaped face, as both the captain and Philip had remarked before, when he appeared to be only a private gentleman. A quiet and impassive face, pale and elongated, with keen, black eyes, dark, closely-cropped hair, and Vandyke beard, which gave him rather the melancholy appearance of some portraits of Charles I. of England. He was tall and slenderly built, with slightly-stooping shoulders, a man of studious habits, whom at first sight impressed a spectator as a kindly-disposed yet rather critical and refined nature. Philip, as he looked at him, no longer wondered that

he had been able to win the first love of such a woman as Adela Austin.

On the other side of Fernandez, and facing the watchers, were three men who impressed Philip differently. One was a large-made, shambling-looking man with fiery blue eyes almost hidden, under white eyelashes, and heavy eyebrows of the same pale hue. His skin was freckled, his features lumpy, his hair red, and his great hands knuckly and seamed. He looked, what he undoubtedly was, a coarse and brutal ruffian. As they afterwards came to know, his name was Dennis MacBride, an Americanised Irishman.

The second from him was an old man, with long, silvery hair and full beard, which gave him a most benevolent appearance. His features were Jewish, the skin olive-tinted, yet waxy in their pallor, as one who had long existed, shut out from the light of day, as, indeed, he had, for he was an escaped prisoner from Siberia, by name Alexis Simonoff.

The third man was insignificant as to size, and swarthy almost to blackness, with features pinched and mean-looking, also deeply pitted with small-pox marks, large, famished-looking and wild, black eyes, and thin, straggly hair that appeared stuck on his face and head in detached patches. This was Pedro Vitroff, a man with a nature like a venomous snake, active and energetic in the cause, yet attached to no man. He had the face and the spirit of a devil.

The others were too smoke-enveloped to describe in detail, but they were orderly in their demeanour, and all well dressed. They listened attentively to what the doctor was saying, and bent their heads in token of their approval—that is, those who were awake; those who were asleep lay as calmly with their heads on

their hands as if no such crime as wholesale murder had been upon their minds.

"Come, we have seen enough for one night. I have a plan made up to take them by surprise after the night comes again," whispered Captain Nelson. "Come, or we shall be discovered, for daylight will be upon us presently."

As they crept along the deck they could see the first signs of that rapid dawn which comes so swiftly in the tropics. The distant horizon was already separate from the sky like two shades of darkness, the one still inky, the other deeply grey, in a few more moments objects would be seen plainly.

Wearily—Philip had never felt so weary in his life before—they crawled down the steps, and, seeking the cabin, flung themselves beside the others, after fastening the door, and were instantly all asleep.

Then the dawn crept in through the porthole, but without revealing those pale shadows that lay side by side on the cabin floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ANARCHISTS.

MORNING in the Indian Ocean, with its balmy air and sense of lightness and life.

The *Rockhampton* is forging along at a great rate. She has coals enough to last for three weeks, and before that time her new masters know that they will have anchored where they want to go.

Two days had passed since the explosion and massacre, and the bodies had been flung over to the sharks indiscriminately — men, women and children. A merry feast for the sharks it had been while it lasted, to which many relations had gathered, wrangling, snarling and fighting over the gifts, as so many human relations after a funeral.

But the ship had sailed away from the ensanguined waters, and once more the waves danced blue and limpid. The decks also had been washed clean down, and the saloon and gangways cleared of the horrible sights, so that only the wreckage remained to remind the monsters of the ruthless deed which they had consummated.

Pirates of old made no bones about deeds of slaughter ; they gloated in torturing their victims, and enjoyed

their grog and cigars better with the smell and sight of blood; they were robust and dirty-fisted ruffians, those pioneer pirates.

These modern pirates were of a different order; they did not drink rum, nor did they smoke strong tobacco. Many of them drank only sugar and water to their mild cigarettes, others imbibed gently of absinthe and claret. They were cold-blooded, clean-handed ruffians who liked the decks cleaned and white cloths on their tables, yet they were none the better for that.

The *Rockhampton* was going well—indeed, recklessly fast, but she was not being worked in a seaman-like manner. The new engineers were scientific men, who knew how to work machines and how to right them if they went wrong, but they were like cold-blooded hirers of horses, they only thought about how much they could get out of their machines.

The sailors were trained men, but they were not Englishmen, and therefore they cared nothing for the ship. The new captain could use the sextant and take an observation, but he was not methodical, and trusted to his compass, chronometer and charts, and as yet had taken no observations. He liked his ease, and trusted a great deal to his eyes.

There are many islands in the Southern Ocean which are not inhabited and not very well known, and, better still, lie out of the ordinary line of traffic. Captain Nelson, who understood Spanish, had heard enough of Dr Fernandez's plans on that night to form his own. He knew what these foreign seamen were capable of, and took his measures accordingly. Captain Anatole was steering with that blind faith in his own cleverness and knowledge so characteristic of his countrymen. He took his daily observations, it is true, and consulted the

compass, chronometer and charts, summing up rapidly and with ready confidence that admitted of no possible doubt about the correctness of his calculations. He had never been in those waters before, and knew the island he was after, only from reading about it, but that was a trifle to his sublime conceit. He had promised to find it, as the great Corsican had promised to subdue the land of the Pharaohs and Russia, and to will was to accomplish with this dauntless sailor.

"These John Bulls are slow; they ruminate like the cows; they have no genius, no decision. They are on the rocks before they can tell where they are—bah! Two minutes suffices for me to point out where we are. Observe we are now in latitude so-and-so, longitude this—our island lies over there, one thousand five hundred and thirty-four leagues from here, and we are going there as straight as an arrow. Let us enjoy a game at cards."

An easy and confident master, careless and undisciplined men, the watches became mere pretexts, for each man was an independent Anarchist, and to wash too often either their own free persons or the decks a degradation to such lovers of universal liberty and equality.

Captain Nelson and those who were hiding with him found it an easy matter to evade those confident murderers. He groaned as he saw the slatternly state of his once trim ship decks, where men flung the debris of their feasts with prodigal and reckless carelessness. They liked to have their tiffin and breakfast on deck, and did not trouble much where they poured the dregs of their coffee cups, wine glasses, or leavings of dishes, for the men now acting as cooks and stewards were comrades, and not servants.

Still the ship went on, for they kept the fires well stoked, and being confident now that they were the sole survivors, after that first general search and the clearing away of the dead, no one troubled about the state saloons. When they reached land, they would unload, and have a fair division of the property.

Meantime they enjoyed themselves, did as little work as they possibly could, after the manner of good Anar-chists, and discussed politics and plans for the removal of tyrants and the smashing up of society.

The male portion of this community numbered in all sixty-five, but they had females and children also with them—women, some of whom had been born ladies, others picked up from the slums of continental cities and prisons. The women, perhaps, were even more bitter than the men against society and respectability. The children had grown up to regard bombs as toys, explosions as amusements, and murders as ordinary incidents in their lives. They played on the decks with the nut shells which their elders pitched at them. and were happy, as any children will be under any circumstances, if they get half a chance.

Some of the women were handsome, most of them, however, were haggard and careworn; none of them were particularly virtuous, as mediocre society expects its women to be. These females had liberated themselves from the rigid trammels of society, and become spartan in their ideas. The careworn ones were perhaps the most conventional and orderly, and created less discord on board, for they were left to attend to the children, but the handsome ones caused a good deal of trouble, for even Anarchists will give way to jealousy at times, mediocre and unworthy as the feeling is amongst true comrades and brothers.

Knives were apt to be drawn, and blood spilt amongst these good brothers during this short voyage, and even the sisters did not regard one another with that benevolence and concord that Socialists ought to feel towards each other. Human nature is such a vile weed to root out of human hearts.

Dr Fernandez tried to keep peace, as did Captain Anatole, but with indifferent success. The ex-Countess de Bergamont, or the Princess Sebastopol, or Baroness von Hilda, having legitimate husbands on board, caused not a little excitement with their free ideas of women's rights.

They were right, of course, according to the Anarchical code, to do as they liked, and their husbands to be regarded as almost traitors to the commonweal to grumble at or attempt to curb or control their inclinations, yet husbands are so unreasonable, as well as wives, sometimes, even in the most perfectly organised communities, that the chosen leaders had a hard time of it, while the unseen watchers almost chuckled when they saw how affairs were progressing.

Dr Fernandez was not a ladies' man in the amorous sense, and through the whole course of their matrimonial misery, his wife had never the slightest cause for vulgar jealousy regarding him. He was a calculating devil, who regarded the other sex with contempt. He had taken his wife because he thought he might have use for her, and if, like Richard III., he did dissemble to suit his purposes, and made love with grace and fervour, she had quickly discovered how much she was to him. He was not capable of vulgar jealousy. He was a true Anarchist, body and soul; a man without a remorse or tremor of fear, who held his own life nearly as cheaply as he did those of others.

He was a scientific fiend, if we dare to compare the playful and turbulent companions and followers of the orthodox devil with such humans as Dr Fernandez, who, to discover a single scientific secret, would coldly mutilate half humanity.

The Miltonic devil is such a capricious and impulsive character compared with the embodied devils of to-day, that they, the older fiends, must surely stand like abashed schoolboys before their master, or else slink back to hell abashed. The *new humour* is much too complete and sardonic for such an absolute novice as poor old Mephistopheles. The old hell can only be regarded as a commonplace skittle-alley to these gentlemen. The brimstone is not strong enough for their refined palates. They quaff a more potent mixture, and play euchre or poker in a hotter place than would have satisfied dear old Faust.

Dr Fernandez was not impetuous like Dr Faustus. He had youth enough to satisfy him. No Marguerite could have tempted him, however alluring or fresh she might have been. He did not care for the petty vices of drinking, eating or ostentation, and diabolical murder hardly moved his blood, unless there was something peculiarly atrocious, original and refined about it. He was a mild-voiced, gentle epicure, who seldom lost his temper, yet withal a laborious and patient investigator, and a great, as well as earnest, inventor in his own peculiar line.

A bomb or infernal machine bursting a second of time before his calculations, even although it did its duty, caused him exquisite pain and humiliation, so finely strung was his nature and so engrossed was he in his peculiar science. While his companions extolled him upon what they considered a complete success, he

would sigh heavily and murmur,—“Alas, I am but a novice; it was a failure,” and withdraw, humbled and weary, to ponder upon how he could improve his system. He was an enthusiast and poet in the art of murder and destruction. To be able to annihilate Europe—nay, the entire globe—with a single touch, leaving his own sympathisers unhurt as spectators, would be an achievement worthy of his brain if accomplished at the precise instant of his calculations; these other isolated outrages were merely trifles.

Adela Austin had been a woman of mind, and seemed at one time almost worthy to be the sharer of his proud destiny. But Adela had insular prejudices, and these prejudices had ran counter with his designs—therefore he had doomed Adela, and now she was removed from his path, mercifully, for he had no hatred towards her. She was English, without a single sense about her of the new humour, yet she was honest and pure as far as she could comprehend these ethics, only she could not go far enough.

Captain Anatole was a boastful fool, yet he was doubtless a good seaman and could steer the ship. When a better man could be found, Captain Anatole would take his *departure* easily and painlessly.

His other companions were necessary, meanwhile, in their different ways. The burly, brutal, Americanised Hibernian, who broke down with his strength, physical obstacles. The others according to their different temperaments. They were all useful to *him*, and he humoured them accordingly.

The women were useful also, for some men will not work without women. They are fashioned so. The colony he was about to found would not require replenishing. If it did, they could imitate the old

Romans with the Sabine women, and so get a new race. At present he only wanted women to allure and keep the men interested in their fell work. He did not want domestic sloth and content, and these women were all vicious enough to serve his purpose.

He would take them to this sterile land in the South Seas, where the Antarctic stream encircled and chilled, and there he would perfect his plans. There were forces of Nature there that suited his purposes exactly, and his followers would not be too happy, for a happy ease of life never yet made a good Anarchist. They would have to do much and suffer much to make life even endurable on that sterile land ; therefore they would be eager to take their leave of it when he bade them.

As for the false and depraved Jezebels who were with them, who were more soul-wearying than the shores they were hastening towards, how gladly would the victims of their stale witcheries hail action to be rid of such companions.

The doctor smiled gently as he thought on these matters, and poured oil on the little stormy waters that so constantly bubbled up around him. He was of cleanly habits himself, and dainty and precise in his tastes, but he was too profound a philosopher to be in the least degree disgusted at the dirt about him. He liked a sumptuous chamber, yet he would be content with the commonest doss-house, for he felt Jove-like with his infernal knowledge and power.

CHAPTER IX.

ADELA'S DREAM.

“OH, my friend, what a dream I have had !”

Adela lifted her head wearily from the floor and looked half-dazed on the haggard faces that surrounded her. They seemed to have all spent a wretched time during that long sleep.

It had been dawn when they lay down, it was now daylight on the third day since the vessel had been captured, so that they had lain unconscious for over sixty hours—a long sleep which ought to have refreshed them, yet which had left them wan and feeble, as horrid dreams will leave the troubled sleepers.

To Adela and the others it appeared as if an hour or two had only elapsed since they lay down, too tired out even to think about their safety. The sun was now shining brightly in at the porthole ; the door was still fastened as they had left it ; no one had come to disturb them, therefore the angels must have guarded them since they were still undiscovered.

“What was your dream, for we have also been dreaming ?”

Several spoke at once, and all looked interested as she began ; but Philip went over to her side and held her hand, at which she appeared comforted.

“I dreamt that we all rose, after lying here for a time, and went back to the saloon where the bodies lay. I

tried to resist going, for I was fearful lest we should be discovered ; but some power beyond my will drew me to the spot where I had been cast, and forced me to lie down once more upon the body that was under me when I recovered my consciousness after the explosion—the body that was so like me in dress and shape, which my husband concluded was me, and there I waited with a numb horror for what was to come.

“I looked round the saloon to see where the others had gone, but could see nothing except the mutilated dead on every side of me. You also had left me, Philip, to my fate, while I felt chained to that body, unable either to move or cry out, with such a feeling of frozen despair and loathing upon me that no bodily pain could equal.

“I feared and hated the dead round me, and particularly the corpse to which I was bound, and although I tried to be pitiful for them, I could not feel otherwise than sickness and disgust, as if they were foul substances with which I had no sympathy. They were dead, and I was living, yet suffering the sensation of being buried alive.

“At first it was not very light, but gradually the sun rose and brightened the saloon, showing my ghastly surroundings more plainly, and adding to my awful despair and horror. I had the knowledge now upon me that the murderers would soon come and discover me lying there, and then the escape of last night would have been all in vain.

“By and by they came, and began to lift up the dead and carry them on deck. I knew what that was for, before I heard the splashing or saw the bodies darken the portholes as they were cast overboard. They took those nearest to the distant door first, so

that I was nearly the last to be lifted up, which made it worse for me.

"I could hear them talking as they went about their hideous task, which they executed hurriedly, for they wanted it over. As they came nearer to me, they were speaking about the sharks having a good feed, and how they had been swarming about and following the ship all the morning. This, then, was to be my doom, to be thrown alive, and torn to pieces by those voracious monsters.

"I tried to rise and show myself now, so that the men might kill me first, but I could not move. I strained my heart in the attempt to shriek, but no sound came, and then I became aware that I had fallen into that state of coma which I had so often read about, when people are supposed to be dead, and in this condition buried, yet seeing and feeling the most acute sensations all the time.

"At last my turn came, and I was lifted by two men, one holding my shoulders, and the other my legs, and then I was carried up the companion-steps to the open deck, my mental anguish so intense during that short journey that I thought it might have broken any natural spell ; but it did not.

"Several of the Anarchists, male and female, were then leaning over the ship's side, and holding up their children so that they might see the sharks at their gruesome work. My husband was not there, neither did I expect him, for he had none of that morbid curiosity which common minds have ; but I heard the laughter of the little children, and saw the fiendish pleasure glowing in the faces of their mothers, and knew what I had to expect.

"My bearers paused for a moment by the side

where the others had gone, and after swinging me backwards and forwards two or three times, threw me clear over and away from them.

"An eternity seemed to pass after I left their hands until I reached the sunlit, clear waves, an eternity of anticipation, and then with a loud splash I sank below the surface.

"The vessel was going fast, so that before I touched the water I was nearly at her stern, and as I sank it was amongst the froth and turmoil that the revolving screw made. This kept off the sharks for a little time, while I was beaten and tossed wildly about, now out of the water and now submerged, wondering all the time how it was that I was not suffocated.

"Then the turmoil gradually ceased, and I began to sink softly and slowly through the limpid fluid. How blue the sky was above me, how soft and cool the sea.

"I had not long to wait before the sharks found me. They had darted away at the splash I made in falling, and hung back from the disturbance of the screw, but that was gone now and the ship many fathoms in front, while round me I could see only water brightly illumined by the sunlight, so that the objects became distinct and magnified as they approached, with swift and noiseless sweeps.

"Three monsters came towards me at once from different quarters, with dull, glaring eyes, and huge, open jaws, within which gleamed zig-zag rows of sharp, small, saw-like teeth. They came sideways towards me, and for a moment glided over me, meeting each other in deadly fight, leaving me for a second alone, while they tore at each other savagely, disputing about the possession of my poor body.

"I was still sinking and watching their white breasts and the cruel bites they gave each other, when suddenly I felt myself seized from below and dragged down with lightning speed to awful depths of green obscurity. A huge monster had swam up and caught me with its teeth by the arm, yet I felt no pain, only as if a firm clasp had gripped me.

"The three shark above, when they saw me snatched from them, left off mangling each other and darted after the thief, like swallows on the wing. Then began a deadly chase that interested me, despite my fears; indeed fear seemed to have left me now entirely with hope. There was also a benumbing feeling stealing over me, perhaps with the speed I was dragged down, yet which did not make me lose consciousness, even if I experienced no pain.

"Above me the waters spread like a dome of green-coloured glass dimly lighted. No sound reached my ears, as I shot downwards noiselessly and almost without a sensation of motion.

"I could see the sharks following and others gathering to the chase, with shoals of other fish getting rapidly out of the way. Strange shapes shot past me—things like pictures I had seen of antediluvian monsters—snakes with bat-like fins, and tendrils or tresses like sea-weed floating around them. We broke through the dense ranks of fish, small and large, and dashed those streamers aside impetuously.

"After a steady dive downwards, and while I was still speculating when we would reach the bottom of the ocean, of which there was yet no sign, my captor turned abruptly and went upward again in a

slanting direction, and at the same terrific rate, still pursued by these persistent rivals.

"From the sombre grim twilight of the mid-ocean we rapidly approached a luminous space like the tender green of a spring glade with the tropic sunbeams penetrating in tremulous and broken shafts, and here the final stand and battle took place for the victim. Here I saw my body torn limb from limb, and the flesh riven from the bones piece by piece and in long ribbons, while the sunny-green fluid became gently tinged with crimson.

"A terrific and horrible battle it was, for a dozen giants had gathered by this time to the meagre feast of my poor body, and yet I watched it all, looking seemingly through the flesh while it was disjointed and mangled, and after that chained to the skeletons that went down while they tore at it. Looking on the horror now with only curiosity, for with each snap and tug, another of my cords seemed to be broken, and I thought that when they had stripped my bones clean that I would be set at liberty.

"Some retired from the battle, mortally wounded, and as they floated back upwards the victors divided their attention between their late enemies and me. I saw them tugging and tearing as viciously at their own kind as at me, while the warm blood gushed out and spread amongst the briny waters in rosy rings, and sparkle until I seemed to be floating in the midst of emeralds and rubies.

"I watched my body go piece-meal; how they mangled and snapped over each insignificant morsel, not one escaping without a wound, and then they let the few last detached bones drop from them as worthless, while I went down again with all that remained of me.

"Slowly I dropped, for the water was dense, yet it seemed borne in upon me that I must find a shelter for these pieces before I was free; therefore I pressed upon them, and bore them down fathom by fathom, past strange and repulsive beasts that barred my road, far from the reach of the penetrating daylight, into reaches of mirky night.

"At times I had intervals of inky blackness, which was all the more abhorrent as I knew that I was surrounded by appalling forms; but these intervals were short, for electric flashes broke almost continually from the scaly beasts and snakes, and lighted the ocean with lurid flashes like wildfire. The submarine monsters emitted these flashes when they were disturbed in their stagnation.

"At last I reached a mountain top and descended the sloping sides, picking my way through a forest of tree-like growth until I reached the valley, carrying the remnant of my bones with me. I had gathered them together now, and carried them in my arms as a woman might carry her dead child.

"In one part of this valley I came upon the wreck of a great ship solidly embedded in the sand and covered thickly with barnacles and seaweed until it looked more like a grotto than a ship, the broken masts and shrouds hung richly festooned with waving masses of hanging weeds.

"This was the sepulchre which I fixed on for my bones. I climbed up the sides and found a way into the cabin where other bones were lying, and here I deposited mine and then sat down to wait for my liberty.

"I did not feel free to leave this dead man's lair; why, I could not define to myself in my dream. I

did not know where to go even if I had been free, for I felt as if I must get some directions on that point. I felt no discomfort, although under so many fathoms of water with that occasionally illuminated darkness all round me. A great desolation and loneliness was upon my spirit, yet I seemed able to breathe down there as easily as I had done while in the saloon of the *Rockhampton*.

"I had seen the sharks tear my flesh to ribbons, and had borne the remnant of my bones down with me; they were still lying at my feet, yet I was the same as before, all my limbs perfect, clothed in the same raiment and without any bodily pain, only dreary, lonely and unutterably desolate.

"The ship in which I now was had been an old fifteenth or sixteenth century vessel, and by the occasional flashes I counted seven skeletons in the saloon, —three large male frames, two slight ones, and two that looked as if they had belonged to children. What clothes they may once have worn had been torn from them or rotted away, so that not a shred remained; while the skeletons were grim with age, my poor bones were the only things that gleamed whitely there.

"A quaint cabin it was, with heavy stanchions and beams and deep panels, and with some large chests and lockers lying against the walls. She must have gone down suddenly in some tropic storm, for there was nothing much disturbed within her, while the cabin doors had not been closed: they stood wide open, allowing whatever liked to, free ingress and egress.

"I crouched on the floor, and waited for what and how long I cannot say, for there was no day and no night there, only the lurid flaring up of light as a shoal of fish darted through, followed by some larger enemy,

also blazing up with the excitement of the hunt, as the hunted betrayed themselves in their fear. What a constant and merciless hunt for life there was here as well as on the earth above! All this added to my hopelessness.

"Yet I had no fear. The sharks had robbed me of that feeling, although many of the sights I witnessed would have appalled me formerly. For although they emitted flashes, there was no sound to apprise me of their coming. A weird-like and horrid monster burst upon my sight, and, after seeming to glare at me, passed away like a phantom. Gigantic things like spiders crawled along sluggishly, clutching at the sides of the cabin as they went, seemingly unconscious of my presence. Great eels or serpents trailed fathoms of slimy length over the floor, now and again filling the place with a blue radiance, and then leaving it in darkness doubly intense. Still I waited and watched, while I prayed to be delivered.

"At last, what I waited for came. A faint illumination, like to that thrown out by the fishy monsters, grew softly in front of me, and, as I looked, from that radiance stepped a little child, a girl-child, who all noiselessly placed her small shining hand in mine, and, as she did so, the weight which had held me down dropped from me, and we began to rise.

"Up, up, through the dark waters into the lightened fluid, past prowling sharks and darting fish we floated, until we came to the free and beautiful sunlight and the balmy air.

"The child still led me, without speaking, over miles of atmosphere, until once more I saw the *Rockhampton* in front of me. Then, when she had placed me once more safely here in this cabin, and I turned to thank

her, she had gone from me, while I woke to find it was only a dream."

"Let us pray," said Captain Nelson solemnly, "for I have had a similar dream."

"So have we!" cried some of the other passengers, as they knelt beside the captain and bent their heads.

As for Philip Mortlake, he looked with grave yet thankful eyes upon Adela, and murmured in her ear,—

"You have come back to me, and now nothing can part us more."

"I thought upon my friend all through my dream, and wished to be near him," she answered softly, as they knelt together.

"And therefore the child called 'Pure Desire' brought you to me."

"Lord, Thou hast been our Refuge from one generation to another; comfort us again for the time wherein we have suffered adversity, that we, with all those, may have our perfect consummation and bliss in Thy eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

"Amen," answered the kneelers with one accord, as they joined in with the captain's deep and solemn tones.

CHAPTER X.

THE WRECK.

THE *Rockhampton* was rushing south at her fastest rate, and already the Anarchists had ransacked the ship for warmer clothing, for they had left the mild latitudes and were well within the influence of the Antarctic currents, where the still distant ice and snow fields could be smelt. Ten days had passed since they had captured the vessel, and the weather had been uniformly fine during that period. Two days more and they would be safe at anchorage in their new settlement, Comprado Island ; this Captain Anatole had assured them in his easy and confident manner.

“The day after to-morrow, just about breakfast, comrades, we shall behold the lofty ranges and wide fjords of our future island—a place like Norway, picturesque and grand, where coal is plentiful, and, as the learned doctor will tell you, which offers every facility to investigation. It is not quite so genial a climate as I should like, but it has the advantage of being safe and out of the way.”

“Yes,” replied the doctor, in a musing voice. “It has the advantage of being the oldest portion now above water of the globe—the site of the most ancient of races, the almost mythical Atalanta—where men lived as we

intend to do, whom the orthodox theorists term the satanic races."

"I like the title satanic race," broke in the flippant Baroness von Hilda. "Let us excavate the remains of that race and found ourselves upon them."

"You have done so already, my dear baroness. The satanic races were supposed to be angels who refused to abide in Paradise, and chose Lemuria instead. The captain is leading us to Lemuria, and we are carrying our angels with us, so that we shall be sure to provide the race you desire, with your aid."

"You are always charming, doctor," returned the baroness shortly, turning from him.

She was thirty-five already, and had not yet presented the baron with an heir.

They were at present dining in the second saloon, and had lit a fire in the grate to keep them warm, for the cold ice breath of that mysterious southern ocean chilled the air so that few could remain on the upper deck for longer than some moments at a time. The days also were growing shorter, and the nights longer and more desolate.

"It was snowing to-night when I came off the bridge," observed Captain Anatole, "and seems likely to be a heavy night."

"I trust that it does not snow perpetually in this land we are going to," remarked the Countess de Bergamont, "for that would be a land of desolation indeed."

"No," replied the doctor. "The summers there are simply delicious; but it is winter now, therefore we must expect rough and cold weather."

"How it is already piling outside the portholes," continued the countess.

Yes, the flakes were coming down heavily and driving about wildly, for the wind had risen during the afternoon. The ship also was pitching a little on those long, wide Antarctic rollers, pitching more than she had done in the tempestuous Bay of Biscay, for the southern ocean rollers sweep higher and wider apart than any other waves.

But even the most delicate amongst those adventurers were not much inconvenienced by this motion. They had now their sea-legs, therefore eat their dinner calmly as if they had been in a hotel.

The engines were working in good order, and the fuel still plentiful, while as for provisions they were not likely to run short for the next twelve months, so that, having everything to comfort them, they were fairly content and happy.

The Princess Sebastopol was a tall, flaxen-haired, white-skinned, blue-eyed Muscovite. She had been sent with her husband to Siberia for Nihilism, but they had made their escape. She was thirty years younger than the prince, who, being a very commonplace old man, who seldom opened his mouth or put himself forward, it is not worth while describing. His one passion was well-founded jealousy of his young wife, who was a cold-blooded and shameless coquette, yet he had the discretion to keep his passion and misery to himself.

The Countess de Bergamont had modelled herself for years after the style of the fashionable *demi-monde* of Paris. Her hair was golden, her eyebrows pencilled, her cheeks rouged and powdered, still she looked well, and conducted herself as her models do. She had been in several prisons, as also had her husband, and not always for political reasons. The count was a thin, little, bald-headed man, with sharp features, well known

about the gambling resorts. He was not at all jealous, for he had trained this woman to be what she was.

These three ladies were what might be termed the leaders of this Anarchical society, and the doctor might well feel satisfied with his female comrades, for there was not a good woman amongst them. It was a ship of abandoned and degraded souls, at unity only in their hatred of humanity outside their own ring, having one virtue only: that of fidelity to themselves, or rather to their cause.

They were murderers and murderesses, as well as profligates and obscene animals, yet none had as yet betrayed a brother or a sister. Fear made them faithful in that respect, for they were spies on each other, using their amours and their friendships for the purpose of probing their secrets; therefore they played at love and friendship, while their every movement was a sham. They were hopeless cynics, who had used up the emotions of life long ago, and could no longer enjoy any pleasure really.

They laughed, however, loudly, and made dubious remarks that were even understood by the youngest, enjoying the forced hilarity of pandemonium, while the doctor and the other chiefs sat listening to them gravely as they smoked their cigarettes; and while they cracked their nuts and drank their wine the storm increased outside, and the watchers on the bridge and at the wheel became like snow statues with that whirling and heavy drift.

Nothing could be seen in front of them with that dense falling shroud; the decks, rails, yards and shrouds were already thickly coated with snow. The sky was filled with the falling flakes. The wind howled

dismally amongst the rigging and cut their faces like knives, so keen and raw it was, while the rollers broke against their bows with thundering crashes that swallowed up all other sounds. Still the captain was easy in his mind as he sat below, drank his wine, and puffed his cigarette, for, according to his reckoning, they were two days from their destination, and ploughing an open sea.

All at once their doom came upon them, almost with the suddenness of the explosion that had given them the ship. The engines going full speed, the diners below laughing or listening to the dubious jokes. The women playing the wantons, the men feigning to be charmed with those stale old tricks, the men on the bridge and at the wheel wishing their watch was over, and the crowd of refugees hiding below. It came with a smash, as when two steam-engines meet, and the noble *Rockhampton* was a total wreck in a second of time, while the people were scattered in all directions.

Down in the engine-rooms, three of the men acting as engineers were pitched headlong amongst the machinery and broken in pieces, their bones crushed, and their flesh torn out of all semblance of humanity before they had time to realise that the vessel had struck. Below, in the stoking hells, the 'seedy' boys were being roasted to death. The men on the bridge and at the wheel were chucked, like bits of wood, over the side and into the boiling wash.

They had been making twenty knots an hour when tilted against those adamantine rocks, and still the engines were going, with no one to stop or turn them, urging the poor ship onwards where there was no way except destruction. Still the snow fell thickly and hid the death-dealing cliffs, while the winds shrieked, and

the great Antarctic waves rose and rolled over the decks that Biscay waves could not wet.

In the second cabin the cushions and carpets saved the lives of many, yet all, when not killed outright, were bruised and battered with the concussion.

And while they lay stunned or dazed, a loud explosion roused up those who could be roused.

"Good God, my nitro-glycerine!" cried the doctor appalled, as he staggered to his feet, the blood streaming from a gash in his cheek-bone.

But it was not his chemicals that had exploded, it was the heated boilers that had burst with the rush of cold water upon them, and now the engines were indeed stopped, and for ever. In spite of her modern improvements and separate air divisions, the *Rockhampton* was settling down to her last berth, and filling rapidly. They had reached Comprado Island two days before the calculations of the confident Anatole.

It was well that the boilers had burst and the engines ceased working when they did, otherwise not one plate would have been left riveted to another in a few more seconds of time, nor one body left complete enough to contain a soul. Each time the great waves receded from those snow-curtained cliffs, they dragged the struggling wreck back a few fathoms, in spite of her powerful screw urging her to the rocks, and when they once again added their own mighty force and rush to her speed the concussions were fearful and death-dealing, not the best tempered steel or iron plates could stand against the united efforts of waves, winds and steam.

Well also for those still left alive, to whom a few moments of time were of more value than tons of gold, that the doctor's nitro-glycerine and other chemical explosives were securely packed, and with extra pre-

cautions against heat and concussion, otherwise with the vessel the Anarchists would have been sent in detached pieces to the top of those lofty cliffs, at the bottom of which they were being butted to death.

It was a fit and terrible retribution for the sanguinary crimes which they had committed under the sacred names of Liberty and Equality, a rapid and fearful termination to their adventure.

The engines had stopped now, so that the giant breakers had the victim all in their own grasp, and ruthlessly they played their game with this new toy, this noble creation of art and science. Backward they sucked her as they broke, and fled themselves before the shock of those bulwarks of ages. Forwards they dashed her like a stone from a catapult, rushing with her and over her with savage roaring, like merry white witches in their demoniac joy over the work of destruction.

She was no longer a stately object as she was tossed to and fro with gaping sides and twisted plates. Her bows had shrivelled up at the first touch, and now her air compartments were being broken one after the other. Her masts were quickly shaken out of her, and now helped the cruel waves in the fell work—a helpless and shapeless mass of still floating iron this noble *Rockhampton* would have appeared, had those heavenly flakes not mercifully covered her from all eyes.

Captain Anatole sprang to his feet almost as soon as the doctor, while some of the others began to recover their senses. The princess, the baroness and the countess were up first, with all their wits sharpened by the imminent danger, for although they were luxurious wantons in the hours of rest and peace, they were tigresses in battle and resolute in moments of peril.

"On deck all who can come, and at once," shouted the captain, in a voice of thunder, as he sprang to the companion, and led the way, the others following as best they could.

It was not easy work to move at all as one wished on this heaving, rocking and tossing hulk, with the white curd dashing over them and lifting them from their feet, yet Captain Anatole was a prompt man, even if a foolishly confident one. With frantic haste, and unaided, he seized up a coil of rope, and fastening one end to the stump of the only funnel left, he unwound the coil, and rolled the other end round his body.

"What are you going to do, comrade?" shouted the doctor in his ear.

"Do my best to reach the shore, or perish in the attempt. Hold on by the rope, and if I succeed, you shall soon know, then come on as best you can. If I fail, then farewell—I have done my best to repair my error."

"Good!" answered the doctor, and as he spoke Anatole was gone, into that vague, snowy and spurning darkness.

Twice the hulk dashed forward and drew back after a concussion that seemed annihilation; then, as she paused for the third heavy and what seemed likely to be the last charge, the doctor felt the rope become taut, Anatole had succeeded.

"Come along, all who can hold on," cried the doctor, as he went first, hand over hand along the line, careless as to who followed him so long as he escaped himself.

It was no time to faint or play the dainty coquette, and these women knew it, each had their own part to do unaided, or succumb, for the bond of com-

radeship ended with the beginning of that rope. The doctor had vanished, so also the Princess Sebastopol, who was a strong woman with a tenacious grasp; therefore the others, who could, dashed themselves madly after her and the doctor.

The wreck was being urged again towards the shore, so that the rope slackened and the clingers were submerged, those washed away who lost their presence of mind, still some clung wisely to their only refuge and went on, hand over hand, even although choking with the brine and boil of surf, amongst which they were flung like bits of matchwood.

Anatole had shown wisdom in the direction he had taken, for the rope went slantways from the point towards which the wreck was driven, so that those who clung fast were not crushed between it and the rocks.

She had struck again and was once more drawn back by the waves—a black mass not a third of her original size, yet floating still, thereby showing how wonderfully well she had been joined and proved before beginning this fatal voyage.

And as she drew back with a shiver that made the rope tingle within the despairing hands, it once again became taut, jerking the half-drowned wretches clean into space, for the captain had fastened his end at a height.

Only five survivors were left on that straining rope, as it jerked them out of the surf, the weaker ones having succumbed to the cold and fury of the sea, and these survivors held on more by instinct and desperation than consciousness, for they were dazed and almost senseless with the battering and submerging, while nothing could be heard except that thunder-

ing, and shrieking as of some mighty waterfall, and nothing seen through that blinding snowfall.

But they had reached the rocks, for they could feel the broken and rugged surface against their benumbed limbs as they struggled, one after the other, to the ledge whereon Captain Anatole lay bruised and half dead, yet he had achieved his purpose, and proved himself a brave and energetic man, even if he had failed as a mariner.

One by one they crawled over the ledge like half-drowned flies until they reached his side, where they lay down hopeless, helpless, and chilled to the marrow.

CHAPTER XI.

ASHORE

THE stern part of the *Rockhampton* was the last left afloat, for at each plunge forward it was the fore and mid-portions that suffered most directly, although the whole vessel was shaken and getting rapidly disjointed.

It was also in the aft part that the doctor kept most of his explosives stored, as he had been a saloon passenger. The knowledge of this, however, was mercifully unknown to the original master of the ship and his companions; even Adela supposed that he must have removed them to the quarters he lately occupied, and that no explosion had followed the repeated and violent concussions gave her reason to believe that he must have cast them overboard before the vessel struck.

They had not been unprepared for the catastrophe, for Captain Nelson had found some opportunities for examining the charts and taking observations in that carelessly guarded ship.

He knew how far out of his reckoning Captain Anatole was as he hovered about and listened to his boasting, or read his log-book while the other was

enjoying himself below and neglecting his duty. It was a painful sacrifice for this true sailor to see this magnificent ship doomed through the incapacity of these pirates, yet it was better she should be wrecked than be used in such a diabolical cause, for he had now abandoned all hopes of recapturing her.

Thus he had prepared them all that day for the events of the night, and when she struck they were provided with life-belts and ready in secure places, so that no one was damaged, as the Anarchists were, with the concussion.

They had dined early on the ready-cooked provisions which the stewards had piled up in the saloon, and on which they had satisfied their cravings for the past ten days, for their desperate position had not deprived them of their appetites, therefore they were not so badly off.

As the Anarchists had done, they all rushed up to the open deck after the first thud, where, superintended and assisted by the captain and his officers, they linked themselves together and waited their chance also to get away.

They saw Anatole go off with the rope, and after the last of the living Anarchists had gone they also took advantage of it, and so reached the shore, with their own share of suffering, yet without a single loss, thanks to the devotion and care of the well-trained seamen.

But it was a terrible passage for all the care taken of them, and they were well-nigh as exhausted as their enemies, who had first reached the ledge, and now lay like corpses in the darkness.

They had no idea where they were, or how much room there was on the ledge, but at the same time

neither could they be sure; therefore, for the few remaining moments that their late prison lasted, they crouched together and looked seaward, listening to the thunderous sounds underneath, with the cold, fierce blast cutting through them and the heavy flakes dashing wildly about them.

They had not long to wait before the end came for the once stately, floating hotel that had ridden so proudly over the ocean, which was now revenging itself for its former submission. Wilder gusts of wind came shrieking down the gullies of this desolate land and whirled the snow-drift aside like a curtain which has been rent asunder, so that they could see amongst the white froth and foam the black and shapeless mass that was being torn to pieces.

The maddened waves broke high up the face of the butting precipice on either side of them, spurting out from that projecting ledge, which they struck like whitewash, running down in vivid streams again to the next advancing column—a savage war of the elements, that nothing could withstand except those mighty boulders.

They saw the black mass advancing once more to that adamant wall against which it had dashed so often already, and then, as it struck, a mighty blaze leapt up like a volcano suddenly bursting into activity.

Up—up that vomit of flame burst, bearing on its lurid wings all that was left of the *Rockhampton*, and illuminating, while it lasted, the whole scene which before had been a mystery of horrors.

The mystery was a revealed fact now with its horrors intensified. One can sit on the edge of a precipice in the dark without becoming light-headed if one knows not

what it is, yet, once it is revealed, confidence for ever vanishes.

Had it been daylight it is doubtful if one of these survivors could have reached that projecting ledge of rock, for it was a huge shelf overhanging a death-trap of a fissure into which the boiling waves were sucked with terrific force, and from which they spurted backwards like pillars of white steam. To look down at this vent-hole was sufficient to make the heart stand still and the hair turn white with terror, for round it the waters, all a mass of angry curd, swirled and ran like a mill-race, to be swallowed into its darkness, and spewed up again in that white spurt.

How Captain Anatole had reached that giddy shelf was only one of the unfathomable mysteries of that awful night. Had his guardian demon—the demon spirit of Anarchy plucked him from the rushing pool and landed him high and safely on the only possible refuge of this wall-like precipice? It appeared as if this must be the case, for surely no wave, even from the mystic south, could have reached so high up.

Captain Anatole could not tell how he got there. All he knew was that when he left the ship he was borne, with the speed of an express train, struggling on the crest of a mighty wave, and pitched like driftwood, yet with whole bones, although sadly bruised, upon that rough floor. He had the presence of mind to untwist the rope from his own body and brace it round the first object his hands could reach, a detached great boulder, before his strength left him, and that was all he could afterwards say about this hair-breadth escape from death.

The rocks beneath their feet trembled as with an earthquake with the force of those exploding chemicals,

spent as they were in the open, for the wreck had rebounded a fathom or so before the explosion came, but for a moment, while those broken plates of metal went up into the gloomy sky, an orange-coloured glare flamed over the scene and showed up everything distinctly for a wide space.

In the white surf the ghastly faces and broken bodies of the drowned, as they danced round that fierce whirlpool, and shot up into the air from that blow-hole, the shrinking survivors from the saloon on the outer edge recognised some of the faces of the dead, when not too much disfigured. They came very close to where they were crouching, seeming to glare at them as they paused a second on the summit of that spurt before they sank with it again into the fissure, hovering like glass balls over a fountain. A gruesome spectacle which made them turn their gaze away after a single glance—yet that glance stamped each feature for ever on the tablets of their memory.

Above and on either side spread sterile and forbidding rocks. Far as the eye could reach, basaltic masses, worn into fissures and holes with many a conflict against the stormy elements, fringed with edges of white where the snowflakes had found a shelter, but otherwise black and gloomy. It was a grand, stern and hopeless picture which that fiery glare lighted up.

They were at the entrance of a vast cavern that yawned darkly behind them. Detached masses of rocks lay about, large enough, most of them, to shelter them from the eyes of those six prostrate enemies who lay on their backs, as yet seemingly unconscious of their proximity. They saw who these six were in that second swift glance—Doctor Fernandez, Captain Anatole, the huge Irish-American Dennis MacBride, Princess Sebas-

topol, Countess de Bergamont and the Baroness von Hilda. They only had escaped.

Crowds of strange-looking bats, startled by this sudden and fierce glare, were trooping out to the night and dashing, in their blind alarm, against white-winged seabirds, who had sought here a shelter, but were now also seeking to escape; the lofty space above, in that vast cave, was crowded with them, although their shrieks could not be heard through the outside tumult.

But other sights, stranger and more terrifying, met their eyes as they looked into the cave.

Below the birds crouched indistinct forms not unlike huge bats with human faces. They clung desperately to the rocks and gazed with horrified glances at the dead faces as they bobbed up outside the ledge, and hung there for an instant before sinking out of sight. Adela and the rest shivered as they turned from the ghastly faces of those rock-clingers to the dead faces in mid-air, for some of the faces there were repeated inside. The horrified living were watching their own dead faces, during the brief space that this awful red glow lasted.

Then the snowflakes came down faster, heavier and more densely than before, and chaotic darkness fell upon them — the bat-like spirits at the rocks; the six male and female Anarchists in the centre of the floor, and those miserable spectators who did not know yet whether they were in the body or not.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE STERILE CLIFFS.

MORNING, grim, grey and dreary, yet decidedly in tone with the general surroundings, broke over this land of sterile grandness and desolation, this barrier land, which stood like a gate to that mysterious south—the home of perpetual ice and snow.

Dr Fernandez and his five friends had lain all through the hours of darkness in a state of fatigue and misery which banished sleep. They were cold, wet and wretched in the extreme, while every bone ached with the battering they had received in the ship and amongst the surf. They had seen the glare of the explosion and felt the rock tremble under them, but they had been too exhausted to lift their heads and look around them. Now, however, the dread reality of their position had to be faced.

The three titled female Anarchists were piteous objects, divested of their paint and powder, with their draggled tresses and saturated robes; yet although they might be capricious and fanciful when plenty reigned, they had too often endured hardships to become dead loads on the hands of their comrades. This was well for them, for, with the exception of the reckless and gallant Anatole, the other two were proof against any such

weakness as forbearance towards the softer sex. These two men would only tolerate women if they made themselves useful, Dr Fernandez being a callous monster and Dennis MacBride a primitive savage of the lowest order, who would as likely become a cannibal as not if necessity drove him to that point; he was troubled with no compunction, no remorse, and no memory for the evil he had committed.

Two instincts or cravings roused them at daybreak from their long stupor, the desire to eat and the desire for heat. They were cold and hungry.

To get warmth they would have to move about and make the blood circulate, since they had not the wherewithal to make a fire. To eat they would have to go forth and seek it. In fact, they were reduced to the condition of the original savage man, without having the advantage of his education, for beyond their pocket-knives they had no weapons of defence or offence. They were stranded and beggared Anarchists, without a single weapon of destruction, and no society to war against; therefore they were just like ordinary mortals who have lost their occupation, ordinary mortals out of work, or snakes with their fangs drawn.

It was a gloomy outlook indeed, and this they all felt as they rose stiffly to their feet and glanced blankly round them and into each other's wan faces. They regretted exceedingly the destruction of that fine steamship with all that it contained. Captain Nelson could not have regretted it more. They mourned also for their lost comrades, not out of affection or pity, but rather that it would not have seemed so dreary if more of them had been together. Six people seemed a miserable company to start the world afresh; two would have been almost as bad as one.

Dr Fernandez, with a preliminary shrug of his lean shoulders, and a shiver over his thin body, was the first to recover the use of his reasoning faculties and begin the examination of his surroundings.

He stepped to the outer edge of the shelf, and, folding his arms, looked towards the sea with a sombre expression in his jetty eyes.

Long breakers were rolling round him and dashing themselves almost as furiously as they had done the night before against the cliffs. He saw that devil's blow-hole under his feet, with its upward long jets of foam, and shuddered again as he thought of its possibilities of destruction ; but the corpses had long since been knocked to pieces and washed away, therefore he did not see them.

The snow had ceased to fall, but the sky was heavy and clouded. It was daylight, but cold and uniform in its dullness and density. The sea reflected the sky in deeper tones of slate colour, a monotony of chilly grey, broken up only by the dark sides of the advancing rollers and the white surf on their ridges. Of the wreck there appeared no traces.

He noted the cliffs with their heavy edges of snow, in all their serrated roughnesses and fissures, with a more hopeful glance, for it seemed possible for an active Alpine climber, as he had been, to climb them. The rope, also dangling idly over the ledge and leading to the surf, below would be of great use.

After a long pause at the entrance he turned to examine the cave. Where it lead to, it was yet impossible to say, and dangerous to explore without lights, and these they had not. It was of vast dimensions at the entrance, and reached far into the rocks, for the roaring of the surf below re-echoed rumblingly in its

interior. The birds had left their shelter, and only the bats remained, hanging heads downward in the darkened places.

"We cannot explore this cavern now, comrades," he said calmly, "therefore we must make an effort to get to the top of the cliffs."

"The rope which I brought last night is still here, doctor," answered Anatole humbly, a feeling of guilt still on him for his fatal mistake, which had involved them all in this catastrophe. It would be some time before he recovered his former assurance. "Let me attempt the ascent, and take the rope with me ; this will help the others up."

"It is your duty, comrade," replied the doctor coldly.

He did not reproach Anatole with his folly. If ever they reached civilisation again—that is, Anarchical civilisation—this bungler would be tried and condemned to the traitor's death for his mistake, and he knew it as well as the others did. His life for the present only was reprieved while he could be made useful.

Poor Anatole turned his head away, and smiled bitterly as he drew up the rope, coiling it at his feet sailor-fashion, while the others looked on without speaking. If they were doomed to perish together on this lonely island, it would be the same to him as if they were rescued, yet he resolved to do his duty and help them in all that he could, without expecting or asking for sympathy or pity. When a man begins to mark this course out for himself, be he Anarchist or Christian, he has taken the first lesson in God's philosophy—a hard lesson, yet holding in its own action its reward, not riches that rust, nor treasure that satiates, but condonation for evil, and the "peace which passeth understanding."

Anatole, the reckless and condemned Anarchist, was about half-way up the cliffs, as he stood on the ledge and prepared to go his perilous way, and only just on the first rung of the everlasting ladder, weighed down with the rope he was carrying round his waist, and the burden of crime, which as yet he felt not, on his spirit shoulders. His mistake at present was the only palpable load he felt, and that he carried in his heart.

He was stiff and cold when he began his climb, with muscles all bruised and sore, yet, sailor-like, he took off his boots and stockings, and rolled up his trousers, in spite of the intense cold that fastened on his exposed skin with Arctic keenness. The rocks also, fringed with snow and dripping with icicles, were torture to clutch hold of, and for a time burned and numbed him. Yet, after that first acute agony, he began to glow with his exertion, and feel a pride in his daring and, so far, success. The doctor was paying out the rope from the loose coil, and watching him keenly as he rose step by step, now clinging to a narrow snow-covered edge or crack, now making a desperate leap slantways, yet never losing ground.

He had only about two hundred feet to reach the top, but the rope was a heavy one which he carried, and seemed to drag him backward, and his foot and hand holds were of the narrowest and most uncertain. His heart was now strained with the effort, and at every step the rope became heavier, while his finger-nails were worn to the quick. It was all bare rocks he had to encounter, without a trace of earth or a shrub. This was as well, if the snow and ice had been absent, but with these to clear away and press down before he could take the next clutch and draw his fasting and stiff body up made the duty like the punishment of the rack.

At last his bleeding hands clutched the upper ridge, more than two feet deep with snow, and he hung over this rock-face with the anguish of a crucified criminal; one more great effort was all that was wanted to complete his sacrifice for his comrades, and then they could come up with some degree of comfort.

The effort had to be made, yet it was a mighty one, and he was weary and faint. Biting his fleshy lower lip almost through, he raised himself by his arms alone, feeling for a while vainly with his broken toes for a crevice, and holding himself up while he did so.

Under the snow he plunges his hand for the next grip, as he rests his weight on the curled toes of one foot. This is the hardest end of his task, for the upper surface is flat and smooth, yet, at last, he meets an undulation, rather than a crack, and clutches it. Then he draws up his knee to his breast, and feels with his other foot for a hold. His other hand he spreads out under the snow, and after groping for a while, finds a ridge. He is over, and on the top amongst the snow, blind and dazed with the white glister; but his task is not yet done, for he must find something to fasten his rope to.

Snow and rocks are all round him, and not a tree or shrub within reach, and where he lies it is rugged and barren.

He cannot look beyond his own immediate vicinity, for the icy blast is blowing like a hurricane on this exposed place, cutting his burning eyeballs like knives, so that it takes all his strength to keep from being blown over the precipice, where he lies on his stomach, clearing the snow with his hands, while he feels for a projection.

He has got it at last—just enough to fasten securely

his rope to a knob of rock like a large button, yet solidly attached to the surface, as he tests before he trusts to it.

Rapidly unrolling the rope from his waist while he has the strength left, he makes a noose and puts it over the knob, drawing it taut. Then, slipping the loose rope from under him, he gives the signal to those below, and, closing his two hands round the rope, lays his chilling body, as a final weight, upon its length on the snow, and swoons straightway off. He has done his duty so far, and gets for a time his reward—surcease.

Dr Fernandez feels the signal vibrating along the rope, and prepares to ascend. He has no consciousness of any duty beyond his own self-preservation. With any other except Anatole he might have tried one of the others before he risked his own precious life first on that rope; but Anatole, with all his boasting, was a staunch comrade, and, in the matter of securing a rope, beyond suspicion. As it stood at present, the rope might break if tried too often, therefore the next up would be the safest. So he prepared to ascend.

He took his boots off, as Anatole had done, and hung them about his neck; then he went up, hand over hand, with great effort necessarily, but without the risks of the first climber, and in time stood on the top beside the senseless body of his comrade, on which he looked curiously.

“Poor devil! he is a bad Anarchist, but a good comrade,” he murmured, as he sat on the senseless body for greater comfort, and, after giving the signal, began to put on his boots.

The women came next, drawing themselves wearily up, yet clinging like cats to the rope and to the rock face. Women, when they make the effort, can climb

better than men ; they are feline by nature, and all felines can climb. To the honour of the savage Dennis, he came last, blowing like a porpoise with his exertions as he came to the surface.

“Poor Anatole ! what a journey he must have had !” said the countess, as she knelt beside the captain, and lifted his cold head upon her almost as cold bosom.

Still, the action was a tender one, and some warmth must have come from her jaded heart, for soon he opened his eyes, and, sitting up, began also to cover his feet.

Anatole was the handsomest and youngest man of the three left on this ice-cold hell, and the countess must attach herself to some man while she had life.

“Poor Anatole ! yes, he has done his duty ; and now we must do ours, if we don’t want to starve. I suppose you are all as hungry as I am,” said the doctor, as he rose to his feet, shading his black eyes with his slender hand, while he bent himself against the blast, and looked about him.

“Desperately hungry and cold, doctor,” cried the women in a chorus.

“Well, I see the indications of a fjord to the north, with the coast line trending towards it. If my scientific calculations are correct, and we can get down to that fjord strand, I fancy we may be able to secure some of the packages from the wreck. The wind and tide act that way, and it is our only present chance of a meal.”

There were inland mountains, six and seven thousand feet high, snow and ice covered, with jagged peaks, also steep valleys at the base, covered with a dark kind of vegetation, but no trees of any description met the eye ; it was a dismal land altogether. But there seemed no scarcity of fresh water, for waterfalls and streams rushed over the rugged mountain sides, and bold rocks started

up, with land-locked harbourage and wide fjords reaching from the ocean inland. It was a wild and picturesque country, like the northern parts of Scotland or Norway, promising fish in the sea, with seals, sea-lions, sea-leopards and other war-like game, with birds in plenty. All the savage required to exist here were weapons, skill and fuel. Perhaps that might be found also with the cultivated science of the doctor, the brute strength of Dennis, the vitality of Anatole, and the tigerish unrest of those hitherto society women. They were vicious and depraved in their tastes, but, as women mostly are, in spite of their affectations, they were healthy animals, and fitter for hardship than even the men, and likely to be longer lived.

A woman can exist on less than a man ; her digestion is better under control. She is soft in texture, yet she can fast longer and endure more in reality than man, although she must pretend to be more easily tired—that is her affectation. In a savage state she becomes without an effort the beast of burden ; even in a civilised state she can endure more nerve fag than three men. The horse is a powerful animal for a short pull, but he requires frequent rests and steady feeding. The ass can do much more on less fodder, with a little encouragement. Man is the horse, and woman is the ass, patient and enduring in spite of her caprices and pretences, longer lived and not so docile unless humoured, yet as brainful if of a less humorous character. She is humorous also. The ass is the most humorous of animals, and the most instructive, only, like woman, it keeps its humour to itself and will not utilise it for the sake of others. The horse knows what is expected and does it, as far as it can. The ass does the reverse, and glories in her perverseness. Yet both horse and ass are keenly access-

able to flattery, only the ass can exist where the horse cannot. Meat and drink are not with her a necessity ; they are only casual indulgencies which she is much better without.

Had there been any soft young men about, the princess, the baroness and the countess would have aired their stale graces and made these young men miserable ; but as there were none, they buckled to without a murmur, endured the cutting Antarctic breezes, restrained their appetites, and followed in the trail of the men with the docility and naturalism of primitive women.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE CAVERN.

“PHILIP, my friend.”

“Yes, Adela.”

“Are we not dead?”

“I think not. I feel as much alive as ever. We had to use the rope in crossing from the wreck to the shore as human beings have ; spirits are supposed to fly where they like. I think we shall have to use that rope to climb the face of the cliff that your husband has used, and which still hangs there. I feel hungry now and would like to eat, don't you?”

“Yes, now you have mentioned it.”

“We were hungry and thirsty on the ship after the explosion, and we eat and drank ; how is that for spirits ?”

“We are also hungry and helpless. Tell us what to do ?”

Philip Mortlake turned about and beheld a melancholy troop of men, women and children come from the shadows of the cave. He shuddered as he recognised some whom he had seen as corpses starting up and down in front of the ledge the night before.

“Who are you ?”

"Anarchists, who shun you," moaned one whom Philip recognised as the baron. "We were drowned last night, yet we are here. I know not how, only we have no place else to go to. Can you tell us what to do?"

Philip stepped over and took the baron by the arm. He certainly, unless his imagination had played him false, had seen his dead body hover over the vaporous spout of the blow-hole, yet the baron felt solid and fleshlike as he was himself.

"Did you not escape with the others, last night?"

"No," replied the poor baron; "I was swept off the rope. I had no strength to cling on. I was drawn on to the rocks, battered about and sent upwards, for I felt it all for a time, and afterwards saw the rest. My body went to pieces while I watched it as I clung to the rocks, then I saw my wife, and lay down beside her, but I could not feel her and she had no knowledge of me. I suppose I am dead, yet I feel alive. I cannot fly. I can do nothing. I don't what to do. Can you not help me, for you have been longer here than I have?"

"I don't know myself," muttered Philip, confused. "Perhaps we have all made a mistake."

"But I saw your body pitched overboard ten days ago, therefore you must be a spirit, as I am now; and surely ten days is long enough to know one's way about even in a strange place?"

"I am on the earth, as I was all the years of my life. We have had to conceal ourselves during that time, and we came ashore through the surf by that rope which still hangs from the cliff top. My skin and clothes were drenched. I can feel you. I can also feel this wall, and if we had food of any kind

I could eat and enjoy it. Does a spirit do all these ?”

“I don’t know,” moaned the baron ; “I, too, am hungry, wet and cold—oh, so cold !” he shivered violently as he spoke.

“We are all cold, wet and miserable,” cried out, like a chorus, the rest of the Anarchists.

“Why did you not join the six who have climbed the wall ?”

“We tried to make them see and hear us, but we could not. They passed through our midst whilst we encircled them, and shouted at them without a perception that we were there, and then we grew frightened and hid from them as you did.”

Captain Nelson and his company looked on these late enemies, but now miserable objects, with compassion, wonder and some perplexity. What could they mean, and what had been the vague doubts about themselves which they had ? Then Adela again spoke.

“Listen, my friends, I had another dream last night. I dreamt that I was able to float about in the air, and that it was easy to do this. I merely balanced my hands above my head, as swimmers do when they are floating—”

“Swimmers don’t do that, Adela,” corrected Philip ; “they keep their hands down by their sides when they want to float.”

“Do they, Philip ?—yes, now I remember, you are right. Swimmers hold their arms that way when they wish to float, but to fly you have to clasp your hands at the back of your head and lean back in this way, while you *will* that you may rise, and lo ! it comes to pass as in my dream.”

As she spoke her body rose gently from the midst of the wondering audience, and floated gracefully over their heads; then she came down again and stood with a gentle smile upon her refined features before them.

"My friends, I think we have passed through the Valley of Death, and that our troubles are over, although where we may have to go, or what we may have to do is not yet revealed to us, therefore we must wait."

"But when people die, they either go to heaven or to hell," said one of Adela's listeners.

"So we have been taught, but now we know differently. We shall learn our ultimate destination by and by, I doubt not, but at present we are still on the earth, and of the earth."

While Adela was still speaking, and the others listening, their attention was attracted by a strange procession which approached them from the interior of the cavern.

A double line of young men and women, all seemingly about the same age of nineteen, came along slowly, led by a child about six, who looked only at Adela, as she advanced smiling, yet with a steady gravity and sedateness older than her years.

"That is the child who came for me when I was bound to the submerged wreck," whispered Adela to Philip.

The girl child carried in her hand a bunch of white lilies. She was dazzlingly fair to look upon, with blue eyes and soft masses of wavy golden hair; so bright did the little maid look, with her white robe and fair skin, that she seemed to shine in that semi-dark cavern.

Her older companions were also beautiful, with their regular features and graceful forms, but they were tawny in their complexions and glowing like burnished copper, with lustrous brown eyes, smiling red lips, and thick black tresses, the girls' being of a lighter tint than were the young men, yet all wore the same placid air of grave content.

They carried in their hands lighted lamps made from gold or new brass of a peculiar shape somewhat Greek-like, and as the warm fumes floated towards the spectators a perfume of violets pervaded the cavern. These lamp-bearers were twenty-four in number, twelve young men and twelve young women. They were simply clad in white robes, which fell in graceful folds about their perfect figures, leaving the arms and feet bare.

It had been bitterly cold before they entered, but now a grateful warmth spread round, like that of a summer day.

Behind these lamp-bearers advanced a woman not older than the others, and evidently of the same race, but so surpassingly beautiful that she drew all eyes upon her. She was tall and queen-like, and although as plainly costumed as were the others, yet it seemed as if a crown of glory rested upon her open brow and dark hair that spread round her shoulders almost to the ground.

Behind her came another band bearing baskets and jars of provisions, fruit, bread of various kinds, with milk, honey and wine.

As they came on, the Anarchists shrank once more to the sides of the cavern with glances of fear and hatred; but Adela, resting on the arm of Philip, as did their friends, looked at them with wondering interest.

"Welcome, friends, to the new state," this queen-like woman said in a sweet, thrilling voice, as she passed, with the fairy-like child beside her, in front of the company, while the lamp and provision-bearers ranged themselves round in a circle, shutting out the shrinking Anarchists, and ignoring them.

Then the child came forward to Adela and, holding out her little arms, she said,—

"Mother!"

Philip started and looked at Adela, who had dropped his arm and was now kneeling before the child and staring at her with incredulous looks.

"Do you not know me, mother?" asked the child with a disappointed expression on her fair face, her little mouth quivering.

"Alas! no, my child," answered Adela, piteously; "I once had a baby girl, but I only held her in my arms for one day."

"I was that baby girl, but I have grown since, mother. Ah! now you know me."

Adela had opened her arms, and the little one was once more against her throbbing bosom.

"I have been with you often when you could not see me, mother, dear, so that it was easy to find you at the last."

"My darling, my darling," murmured the kneeling woman, hiding her face amongst the mass of golden hair.

"I have been growing ever since you lost sight of me," continued the child. "All children keep on growing until they are women and men, only here they never grow old. You will be happy here, for we have everything we like when we have learned how to get it. I shall teach you some things, and Hesperia here will tell

you the rest, for she has been here a long time and knows everything."

"Hardly anything yet," answered the beautiful woman, "but I am learning some of the wonders of creation. But you are thirsty and hungry, therefore eat, for we have a journey to take as soon as you are satisfied."

It seemed strange, if they were spirits, how they should want to eat and drink, yet for all its apparent incongruity the invitation was grateful to one and all; therefore they sat down and permitted their beautiful attendants to wait upon them while they partook of the viands placed before them.

"Philip," said Adela, looking up with shining eyes, and a face so transfigured with joy that Philip Mortlake could hardly recognise her, "I did not tell you about that one sorrow of my past which has now become my joy, for I thought that she was lost to me forever."

"What has been is never lost," said the queen-like woman calmly.

Philip observed that the food which they were eating was composed entirely of the produce of the earth—grain and fruit, with what animals give without sacrifice. No life had been taken to cater for this repast, yet it was delicious and satisfying. He looked towards the miserable criminals by the wall and felt a sudden pity for them, and a desire to share with them also. The woman Hesperia, as if she had heard his desire, looked at him and said gently,—

"We have come for you, the victims. Our food would be insipid and distasteful to those blood-stained spirits. They will be taken care of presently by their own kind."

Even while she spoke and pointed towards the dark

ened cavern, Philip saw shapes moving along, shrouded by the darkness and carrying with them smoking dishes. These also gathered round the hungry Anarchists and ministered to their wants.

"What are they—devils?"

"Yes," replied Hesperia. "They are the spirits of murderers, the ministers of blood and destruction. Sympathy has drawn them to their own kind. They are what we call nucleus spirits, late arrivals. They haunt the surface of the earth and incite mortals to crime, for that is at present their only instinct and happiness, but they cannot hurt us. Soon we will leave them behind, and they will take these new-found friends with them?"

"Where?"

"To the haunts of their former crimes, there to plot and plan other outrages in the brains of the earth-bound and flesh-controlled."

"Is there no hope for them?"

"Yes; truth and goodness are immortal principles of the soul, crime is only an earth disease; it runs its course and wears itself out in time, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter."

"But what about the soul?" inquired Philip earnestly. "Is it not affected by this contamination?"

"Not the soul—the spirit is chained by the desires of the body long after the body has been demolished, yet those desires pass also after a time, and when that moment arrives the spirit begins its upward course. Some day the worst of these devils will become angels. It does not matter much to the soul what the body does on earth with itself, as the two are as difficult to unite as oil with water. More difficult indeed, for while oil and water may become a medium in certain

proportions, the soul can never, under any conditions, amalgamate with the body. What the body does, cannot influence the soul more than prison walls influenced the captive; the prison, if badly built or badly looked after, will decay and fall to ruins, and in the same way the body suffers alone for its own neglect. The soul is always pure, for it is a living part of God."

"What of these miserable spirits, though?" again queried the inquisitive Philip.

"Some will be drawn back by desire to earth and become rehabilitated, and then they must either be worse or better."

"And then?"

"Time cures all evil. You will learn more by and by. Meantime, let me show you what the world was, during my last sojourn upon it, before those nations who are considered ancient by modern man and have become merged in later races existed, when what has become ocean was flourishing lands, and where now ice and snow have blocked for ages, the sun shone warm, and fertile forests and gardens beautified a world, even then no longer young, for we were the last of many races, the last of that epoch, which the inspired amongst you get a whisper of from us, and term the golden age."

She rose as she spoke and went before them, the lamp-bearers guarding the group as they passed along the cavern, leaving the hoarse roaring of that bleak sea and those damned spirits behind.

CHAPTER XIV.

HESPERIA SPEAKS.

AFTER going for a considerable distance along the cavern, Hesperia paused at a portion of the cliff, and touching it at one point, stood aside and waited.

As she did so, a portion of the wall seemed to fall outward, revealing a wide entrance, into which she lead the way with the lamp-bearers round them.

It was such a startling upheaval of all their preconceived notions about that unknown state after death that the new-comers could hardly credit their senses, or think that they were not still in the flesh. They had been taught that everything would be so different. They had expected such a total change, and yet here they were, and had been for the past ten days, eating, drinking, and doing exactly as they had done all their lives, with only a different change of scene. Instead of passing through walls, the walls had to open like ordinary doors before they could get on their way. Their feet seemed to strike the ground solidly enough ; in fact, if they had lost their bodies, they had no perception of the loss as yet.

"You are no different," said the guide Hesperia, as if in answer to the thoughts which were passing through their minds. "You have gained other powers, added to those you had before, only you cannot use them yet,

for you are in the same condition as children are when they come into the earth ; yet you were invisible to human eyes when I met you, although you did not know that. What you eat while on the ship, after your bodies were thrown off, was not the actual food you thought it to be, yet it satisfied the want you imagined yourselves as having. Now, by the powers that we all possess, I have materialised you as well as myself, so that you could be seen if any human eye could now see you. That is why we all walk as mortals do, instead of flashing through space, as you will easily do when you are taught and gain sufficient confidence in your own new gifts."

Philip thought of the account of Christ and Mary at the tomb, when the Master told her not to touch Him, for He had not yet risen. The stone placed there had to be rolled away, before even He could come forth, although afterwards He had appeared through closed doors without any effort.

For an instant a very human and unworthy twinge of jealousy had darted through him when he saw the reunion of mother and daughter. He had been the only friend of Adela before her little girl had come to share her affections, or, perhaps, draw them from him ; but one look at the winsome little maid cured that unworthy feeling and gave him a new pleasure. She would be his child also through all eternity, a pure bond to keep them both together. The child, whose tender life on earth had been cut short by the fiendish cruelty of her earthly father, had not yet mentioned him. It was the mother only she had come for. The Woman is the only true Creator of Life, and all life belongs to her, as it came from her. Man has no after portion in it.

Adela had returned to his arms after that first

embrace with her long lost infant. She was now leaning on him with one hand, while the other held the little hand that was leading them both on to that mystic future.

"What a simple effort death is," she whispered, "and how happy we are to have passed it so well. Now we are all together, Philip, I have not one wish left."

After traversing a space of level rock, they came to a long flight of steps, which they descended after their guide. Again a level stretch, and down another long range of stairs; it seemed as if they were passing into the very centre of the world, yet they felt no sense of fatigue.

At the foot of the eleventh range of stairs the beautiful guide paused, and said,—

"You have one more trial to pass through before you can enter my land, and there is no evading it; but we shall be with you to comfort you. We are coming to a wide and deep river, which flows through this dark passage. The philosophers, whom you term ancient, knew of it, as they knew a great many other secrets now lost to humanity, and they called it the Styx. Its real name is the River of Eternal Youth. It is cold as the most frozen of waters, but it will wash away all the years which have aged you and enfeebled your energies since you reached maturity. On this side of that river you stand as you quitted earth, with your earth particles restored to you in their imperfections. Those waters will dissolve them from you for ever, and leave your spirit body young and at liberty. You are now about to taste of the real bitterness of spirit birth; yet fear not to plunge in, for the reward is a mighty one."

A great horror fell upon the company as they heard

these grave and solemn words. The blackness of the space around them, which the small lamps only accentuated, for they were now on a vast plain, where no sides or roof could be seen. The deathly silence that reigned around, for no echo rose from their footsteps, made that coming ordeal seem doubly dreadful.

"Do all have to pass through this river?" whispered Adela, clinging closely to the arm of Philip.

"Yes, all must pass who would become as we are. Some spirits shiver on the brink and go back again to haunt the earth. They come again and again as ages pass, until eventually they find courage to take the baptism; but until then they are imperfect and earth-bound spirits, who can only tell what they see and know. Your daughter went through as a baby. Be brave, or we must leave you and let others take you in charge."

"Go in with me, Philip, and I will not fail," answered Adela, with a convulsive shiver.

They were walking now over what seemed a plain of black basalt, shining and worn smooth as ice with the countless feet which had trodden over it, and as they went on the atmosphere became as cold as if they had been in an ice vault. Shadows also seemed to glide past them, cravens retreating from the horror.

At last they paused on the brink of a wide sheet of inky and swiftly-flowing tide. They could not see the other side, and the side they were on was solid and black rock. It was an evil sight, and their hearts stood still as they waited for someone to set the example.

Captain Nelson was the first to break the spell of silence.

"This will never do, friends. If it has to be done, best get it over quickly; so here goes."

The brave old man took a sudden run and a header from the bank. No ripple or splashing broke that oily blackness as he disappeared, only his loud and agonised shriek as he touched the surface. That shrill shriek made the ordeal seem more horrible than before.

"Be brave, be brave," whispered those who were watching them, with their lamps now burning so dimly.

"Come, Adela," said Philip, clenching his teeth, and clasping her round the waist, he drew her shrinking form towards the jetty flood.

A moment they paused on the brink, and then together, with shut eyes, they made the leap, and, as Captain Nelson had done, felt as if their souls had been torn from their bodies and was escaping in that wild and joint cry, while the waters closed over them.

Once he had read of a man who had fallen into a furnace of molten metal. The papers said the man could not have suffered at all, for those who saw him fall said he was dissolved instantly, leaving not even a trace of his humanity behind.

This fate seemed to have overtaken him now in the quick instant of touching the surface and the sinking or dissolving of his humanity. It was an eternity of agony concentrated into a second, and then came peace unutterable. He and his friend had crossed the black river.

"Ah, mother, how beautiful you are."

It was the clear voice of her child which fell upon their ears as they emerged on the other side, where willing hands were lifting them; and as Philip looked at the girl whose hand the child held, he could hardly believe his senses. It was Adela as she must have

appeared before care and time had clouded her life—virginal, fresh and smiling. He also felt as if he was but twenty.

“Ah, Philip, have I changed as you have? Why, you have become a boy again.”

It was Adela as it was Philip, for he still had hold of her hand and waist, and both laughed merrily as they regarded each other. She, with her abundant golden brown tresses, blooming cheeks, and eyes as blue as were her child's. He, brown-haired and slender, yet wearing the characteristics which enabled her to recognise him.

“Yes, we all seem to be altered for the better since we took that dip, but it was a scorcher while it lasted,” said a voice beside them that they felt was that of Captain Nelson, no longer the white-haired veteran, but a stalwart youth.

“How many have crossed over?” asked Philip, to the guides who were still beside them.

“Alas, only you three,” replied Hesperia. “The others have gone back.”

“Cowards!” replied the captain in his deep musical voice.

“Ah! it takes great faith and courage to cross that river,” replied Hesperia softly. “Ages may pass before they win that faith and courage; meantime, they will not be unhappy, for they will have many companions in their pilgrimage through the earth, and fair scenes to dwell in. They will be happier than they were while in the flesh, but their knowledge and powers are limited. Yours have now become unlimited. Time and space will be at your command. You will know all that the earth has passed through, and can penetrate other worlds at your will.”

"That may be," said Captain Nelson, in a slightly doubtful voice. "I certainly have got rid of all symptoms of gout and rheumatics since I had that heroic plunge. I also feel as young and fresh as when I was fourth mate, but I don't seem to have either the power or the inclination to fly; but perhaps it is like swimming, wants a little practice."

"That is it exactly, or rather what is practice on the world becomes will-power here, which is the all-potent factor of the spirit body. You *will* to be what you please and you are without an effort. For instance, I am taking you to a land which has been for long cycles buried under the ocean. Our civilisation and the works we created then, have long since vanished from human ken, or rather become merged into other substances. Some fossilised remains are still left in those sea-buried rocks, yet they are too obscure to be read even by the most astute of scientists. No hint remains to tell earthlings of to-day what we were, cycles before the date fixed as the creation of man.

"Yet from those dispersed atoms, which were once our cities, our gardens, and our forests, we are able to rebuild the land which was our own, and where we love to dwell still, with our customs and habits. We can create our own balmy atmosphere, spread over our land the same skies we used to have before the climates changed, for, as I have said before, what has been, cannot be lost.

"We are now leagues under the ocean's bed. Buried, as mortals might think, in the heart of the earth. Yet the gardens of the old world lie quite close at hand, and it is exactly the same now as it was myriads of ages ago. We grow no older in this world of ours; time signifies nothing to us. The earth is our playground, from

where humanity comes to us. We watch the changes of to-day as we watched those of yesterday. Egypt still flourishes to the freed Egyptians, Assyria to the Assyrians, Greece, Rome, all these trifling changes, down to what is considered great to-day.

"We were early on the earth, as your wise men would say, yet before us countless races had flourished and passed away.

"These men who sent you from earth, the Anarchists, had their reign before our days and after them. We occupied an era of universal peace, wisdom and rest.

"Nothing rests for ever, not even the Great Soul from whom we all come; it broods and produces new worlds in that everlasting unfathomable space, new men and women; yet the new worlds and new races come from the old worlds and old races which have been worn out.

"The Great Soul, of which we are portions, is unreachably and cannot be exhausted. We go on—on—on, gaining knowledge and power as we advance. The material atoms of worlds only are limited and reutilised. Your body of ten days ago, the last remains of which were swept down that river, will be returned to earth and rehabilitated as something else, for you have no more to do with them. If ever you require a human body you can take it from anything—the dust on the roads, the flowers, the rocks, but you may only borrow those atoms for a time, and for a special purpose.

"Your spirits are your own for all eternity, as your bodies were on earth; your soul belongs to that Mighty Source Who will not rob you of it, for what It gives It never takes back. It breathes eternally, and every breath creates myriads of souls. Come! I have told

you enough for the present—let me show you my land.”

As she spoke, the circle of young men and girls closed round these three rejuvenated spirits, and like a flash of thought, they felt themselves borne along through space.

CHAPTER XV

FLOTSAM.

DR FERNANDEZ led his little party over the snow-covered cliffs down to where the wide and sheltered fjord opened a passage inland from the tempestuous ocean.

They were all hungry, faint and exhausted, yet they were forced to make a long fast, and to the credit of the three women, they did not murmur, as the Israelites did in the wilderness. They had sacrificed others, they had suffered in former days justly and unjustly for their crimes or for their principles, therefore they did not complain over this harsh decree of Fate.

It seems a strange link that of murder to bind men and women together in the holy bonds of fraternity, and yet these three men and three women, with all their individual vices and vanities, were loyal and true to their crimson cause. They had cast aside all the prejudices of society in favour of honesty and virtue, except honesty regarding their bond towards each other. Their individual habits and innate inclinations were their own to indulge in or refrain from as it pleased them best, so long as these habits did not endanger or interfere with the sacred cause of destruction. They had abjured the creeds and beliefs of their infancy as super-

stition, and mocked openly at the idea of their being a God or a Providence watching over the affairs of earth, and yet had embraced with passionate devotion and fervour a superstition as profitless to themselves and injurious to their fellows as the worship of Bowana or the devil.

Their war was against Capital and Power, but they had no desire to rebuild any other structure from the ruins they hoped to make. Their principle was annihilation—to make the surface of the earth a smoking field of destruction, to reduce the world to chaos; but they did not wish to re-create the world that they had destroyed. They were ready to perish in the universal holocaust. Their faith was one of “Nothingness,” yet they were as sincere and devoted as any Thug who ever drew his scarf, and would have aided each other to the death.

The devil and his satellites walking over the snow-covered ridges of hell were not more resolute than were these shipwrecked Anarchists to live if possible, and to escape from this land of desolation for the sake of their propaganda; all, save one, looked towards Europe as the theatre of their future actions, and for the present made the cravings of nature subordinate to their mad enthusiasm. They were as mercilessly devout to their cause as ever was the bigot of the Inquisition, priest of Baal, Calvinistic reformer, or pitiless scientist in the pursuit of knowledge, as devoutly mad, as mankind ever must be, when he permits himself to be possessed of any single emotion, be it love, hatred, religion, science or patriotism.

They had been but lightly clad at the moment of the shock, for, as we have said, they were at dinner. The women particularly, with their exposed necks and arms,

suffered most, although, all being drenched through, there was not much to choose amongst them. They looked like pinched masqueraders returning from a late ball, and suffered from those keen blasts bitterly, even although they walked as quickly as they could, and hid their exposed parts as much as possible, the men by tying their handkerchiefs round their heads, and burying their hands in their pockets, the women by making shawls of their thin skirts, lifting them up and wrapping them round their shoulders and faces.

After a couple of miles of this active misery they came to a gully, bare as was the ridges of any trees, yet plentifully scattered with rocks and stones.

It was warmer in the shelter of this gap, and the snow was not so deep as they scrambled down; also, for the first time since landing, they saw grass growing—a coarse description of grass, full of moisture, and bog-like.

They were not long, however, in reaching the sea-shore, which they found smoother here, for they were within the shelter of a bold headland, and walking upon firm sand, the tide being out, while in front of them spread a harbour-like bay, well protected from the incoming breakers by a number of rocky islands.

Outside these islands they could see the white surf leaping high up as it broke against the outer barriers, but inside the waves were only slightly disturbed. On the rocks, also, they could see the basking seals and sea-lions resting, their smooth bodies and round heads glistening with the wet; this was a favourite fishing-ground of theirs evidently, for they were in considerable numbers.

Crowds of bird life hovered above them—the long-winged and snowy albatross, penguins, teal, petrels, gulls,

sheathbills, cormorants and Cape pigeons. The rocks were white with them in parts, and to the experienced eyes of Anatole and MacBride, who were both sailors and had been shipwrecked before, these, at anyrate, promised them occupation bird-nesting, for a time they need not actually starve while eggs were to be obtained for the climbing.

As far as their eyes could follow it, this ocean estuary ran open and wide inland, but what pleased them most was to see, floating on the surface of this natural harbour, a number of articles from the wreck—cases and barrels, which looked like provisions, with other objects drawn to this sheltered haven by the tides, and prevented from floating out again by the rocks. The doctor's knowledge of tides had proved correct. They were there, and would probably drift shoreward with the next incoming tide, but to get hold of some of them now was a vital point with all.

Anatole and Dennis settled the question by throwing aside their upper garments; stripping, in fact, to their under drawers without troubling to ask permission from the ladies, who looked on apathetically as they crouched down on the sand close together and shivered under their skirt mantles. At a time like this the civilised and the savage approach one another very nearly.

Dr Fernandez was a fatal shot with the pistol, but he could not swim, therefore he was forced to stand beside the females and watch these two dauntless ruffians prepare to face cramp in those icy waters for the sake of the common weal. He did not soften towards the unlucky Anatole for all he was doing, yet he would send in his report without bias when he reached Europe, and let Anatole have

a fair chance with the council. Meanwhile he trusted that they would be successful, for he was decidedly faint with his long fast.

"That case nearest looks like spirits," observed Dennis to his comrade, as they stood on the strand. "Let us get that one out first."

"Right, comrade," replied Anatole, and together they stepped into the water and began to wade.

The sands sloped rapidly down, so that they were soon beyond their depth, which they were glad of, for the gradual immersion was a torture. They both knew that these waters were at times infested with sharks even more daring and voracious than the tropical species, also that they would most likely be about in numbers now with the dead, yet they had to take that risk, and could only hope that the monsters might be engaged outside the reefs.

Five minutes' energetic swimming did them good, for they were both well matched in strength, and good swimmers, and brought them up to the nearest group of rocks, against which the case with some loose spars and planks floated as they had been left by the returning tide. As they were both needing a rest, they drew themselves up to the rock and began to consult how best to manage their prize. The sight of the spars and planks inspired them with a new idea.

"I don't relish making too many trips of this kind, Dennis, if we can help it," said Anatole.

"Nor do I, you bet," replied Dennis.

"Then let us sling these spars and this case together and move on to where some of the other articles are; it will be a longer voyage and keep our hungry comrades longer out of their food, but it will save time in the long run."

"That is so, comrade," assented Dennis, and together they set to work, their progress watched anxiously from the shore.

It took them a good half-hour to make the temporary raft, and when it was done they found that it would only carry one of them, but farther out, about sixty yards, they saw other objects floating, and toward these they directed their attention.

Again taking to the water, they pushed their raft in front of them, slowly and with great effort, resting on the spars when tired, until they reached the second layer of rocks. On these several seals, who were resting, watched their approach with alarmed interest, until satisfied that these were dangerous strangers. They flopped rapidly under the surface, leaving their perches to the invaders.

They had been over an hour traversing those sixty yards, and were chilled to the very heart as they reached the rocks, yet they did not pause longer than to stretch themselves and swing their arms about before they began to collect the packages and other flotsam, and lash them together.

"The tide is on the turn, Anatole. We shall get back more quickly than we came," cried Dennis, as they secured the last package and tested their raft, which was at last solid enough to carry them.

They had also a couple of planks which they could use as oars. Then with a covetous look at some other articles, which floated still further away, they began the return journey.

The tide had indeed turned, and was rushing in swiftly between the rocks, which rendered their labour comparatively easy as they floated back. The strip of sand where their companions had been left was nearly

covered, while the watchers had been forced to climb the rocks ; but, to their great joy, they saw that the wreckage was beginning to drift landwards. If they were lucky, they would be able to secure the bulk of these before nightfall without having to swim for them.

The damp and cold blast still blew hard from the sea upon their bare backs and chests, but they no longer felt the cold as they worked these heavy plank-oars with all their strength. They were better off now, even in their nakedness, than were the damp and shivering watchers ashore.

At last their loaded raft touched the rocks, and, springing off, they secured it with some spare rope, before re-dressing themselves. They were in a happy mood with the prospect of meat and drink before them, and glowing with their heroic exertions, therefore they both laughed, as they advanced like brawny savages towards the ladies, when they saw how they had utilised the cast-off garments.

"I shall treasure these trousers ever after this for having been worn by you as a mantle, Eugenie," cried Anatole, as he took them from the countess with a polite bow.

"They were of great comfort, Anatole, although decidedly damp," answered the poor Countess de Bergamont. "But oh ! have you brought anything to eat and drink ?"

"I hope so, my dear, but we must try to secure the other articles which are coming towards us before dark, and for this we shall need all hands."

"Give us something first to break our fast, and then we can work better."

It was no easy matter without tools to force open the

cases, yet, with the aid of their united efforts, they managed after a time to get at the cognac and a small case of biscuits, which, being slightly made, was more easily burst open.

These two cases they carried above water-mark first, gauging their contents from the outside, and then eagerly helped themselves.

The top of a brandy bottle was adroitly broken off by the doctor, and handed round the company. It was good old liqueur brandy, and the draught gave them almost instantly new life. Certainly never did cognac and biscuit taste more delicious than this did to the famishing ones, even although so rudely served round.

"There is a small cave a short distance from here, where we can find shelter for to-night," observed the doctor, when the first sharp edge of their hunger was over.

"Then let us lose no time, comrades," answered Anatole, "for we shall have another wild night. You and the ladies bear a hand, and carry what we have brought to the cave, while Dennis helps me to secure what flotsam we can as it comes in. We have little time left us."

The three women sprang to their feet, eager to work now that they were comparatively comfortable, and proved that they were not dilettanti, although accustomed to luxuries and being waited upon in their palmy days.

Fate or Providence was more merciful to these human tigers than they deserved, or it might be that they were the chosen and blind instruments of some Retributive Force, who were preserved to follow out their decreed mission to the bitter end. "The wicked flourish like a green bay tree," Holy Writ declares, although why it is

so, it is impossible for the reasoner to answer. We think sometimes we know why the beasts of prey have been created, with the monsters of the deep, the spider and the snake, also the human beasts of prey; and again we are lost in wondering speculation by reason of our innate instinct of justice.

Perhaps the disembodied demons who had been their comrades were assisting them, aided by the haunting developments of former murderers; but they were successful in capturing most of that flotsam and storing it inside their cave.

They found provisions enough to last them for some time, also some boxes of clothing, and amongst other useful things, a carpenter's box about half filled with tools, and, what was more to their present comfort, means to light a fire and warm the tins of soup.

They were for the time jovial and hopeful, with a further investigation before them on the morrow, as they lay down to sleep, on their second night, warm and dry

And while they slept, securely sheltered, the storm again rose and lashed the island with flying foam, driving in more of the freightage from the disjointed ship that had gone down the night before.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GARDEN OF HESPERIDES.

IT seemed no longer space of time than takes place between the shutting and the opening of an eyelid since Philip, Adela and Captain Nelson had stood upon the sterile shores of that black river, and now they stood beneath a clear blue sky and in the midst of a semi-tropical landscape.

"Already you have proved how easy it is to fly," said Hesperia, smiling upon them. "We are still under the Southern Ocean, yet, if we had wished, we could have been at the opposite end of the earth in the same time."

"I know that we have been whisked off, but how is still a mystery, yet I am perfectly content to be where I am for the present," answered the captain.

They were at the entrance of a spacious garden, arched over with fruit trees of many varieties. Behind them lay a sunny valley, through which a clear stream ran and bubbled over many a small cascade, pouring like crystal over the mossy boulders, dashing milky-white within the amber-tinted pools, and finally losing itself under the cool and sheltered avenues of this delicious garden.

Above the valley rose lofty mountains, purple and blue in the warm sunlight, range behind range. They rose until they seemed to reach the very sky, the most distant merely faint shadows of picturesque lines and soft dyes of deeper blue than the space above them, a vision of extreme distance and subtile gradation of colour as well as variety in form, as fairy-like and poetic as ever eye could feast upon. There was nothing harsh or monotonous about any portion, either in shape or tint, and the sunlight gleamed over it with a mellow lustre.

The sides of the valley were lined with terraces and gardens, all lavish in their luxuriant freedom. Walls had been reared at parts where wanted to support the soil, but they were toned to the harmonious tint of the cliffs, and in many places covered with trailing vines. The summits of palaces shone above those waving and clustered trees, while walks and steps led down from terrace to terrace by many a wind.

Fountains played in the gardens, the little rivulets from their basins dropping over the cliffs on to the sloping sides of the hill like

“Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn,”

or stealing gently down to join that louder-voiced central stream.

The upper heights swam in a mellow light like the house of the lotus-eaters, purely bright as was the heaven of St John at Patmos, while in the valley rested subdued shadows from sheltered copse, uplifted pine and pillared cypress. It was a valley where the perfection of cultivated Art was wedded to capricious Nature—a landscape without a flaw or false line.

The garden in front of them filled the entire bed of the valley from where they now stood, and had been designed during many ages of peace and security to produce shadow and repose. Down its countless festooned avenues figures of young men and maidens moved, easy and graceful, thinly-clad, as were the natives of ancient Greece. Philip was not astonished to see snowy cattle and sheep browsing or lying in lazy content on the green banks of the streams, also goats on the heights, nor the doves hovering in mid-air, neither did those floating gauze-like figures who rose at will and swam across the space surprise him ; such a landscape required these wonders to be complete.

"These gardens lead to and surround the city where I was born," said Hesperia. "We will walk through them and come to the principal gate. It is all as it was during my lifetime. We were a great nation and had many places like this, for the earth was then enjoying a long millennium of peace. Men had learned to live simply and without crime, war was unknown, also want and poverty. We had no great men nor women amongst us, no kings—at least, none as you understand them. We had reached to the perfection of invention, art and science. Indeed we did not know death, for our friends never left us. We saw their bodies perish through natural decay ; but they were only absent for a short time, and then they returned in their first youth to help us in the burning of their worn-out garments."

"You had books and histories then ?" asked Philip.

"Yes, my friend. I will show you one of our libraries, with our picture and statue galleries. The history of the world had been written and printed then as far back as we knew it, which reached many more

ages back from our day than your historians attempt. And yet you fix upon the creation of the world cycles after we had been forced by the gradual changes of climate to migrate northward."

"How did the change come about?"

"As the change is taking place on the world now and always has been. The ocean eats morsel by morsel away, and men retreat before its approach, earthquakes occur and countries sink, volcanoes burst out and bury cities, while the earth gradually alters its position, until what was tropical becomes ice-locked. Countries, like fields and gardens, when they are used up, have to lie fallow and rest for years or cycles of centuries. The human race never perished outright at any period; one nation became merged in another, adopting the habits and language of those they went amongst until their own became lost. An earthquake or an outburst of fire might destroy the records of a people or break the historical link, but change is the order of Nature."

"Yet when you reached to this state of perfection, how could your race ever change?"

"As the earth changes, my friend. Men became wearied of peace and plenty after a time, and went over the mountains and waters in search of adventure, and warlike strangers came and conquered us; but that was long after my earth-time."

"Yet you are contented with your life of peace and rest in this paradise?" queried the inquisitive Philip, who already had his own ideas about perfect rest.

He had listened in churches to descriptions about Heaven being an eternity of Sundays, and he had never been much enamoured with this notion of perfect felicity. To sit for ever in crystal halls or on golden thrones, playing the harp and singing an eternal re-

frain of praise was not his conception of how he would enjoy the passing ages. He had been a practical sinner on earth, mourning the sins of selfishness, meanness and duplicity, with a heart filled with sympathy for his own kind, and a great love and tenderness for those animals who are given into man's charge, yet he did not like the idea of everlasting rest, varied with everlasting adulation.

"This is our present heaven of rest, our old, dear home, to which we gladly return when we are tired with our labours. We choose this as the gathering-place of our age, as children who are called from the home circle return during holiday time, and meet together to exchange thoughts and experiences. Were I content to sit down here and bask, then indeed my soul must have left me and my days of progression be at an end. True, we have our periods of rest and reunion here as they have in the flesh, when all is pleasure and happiness, but these are only intervals in a life of action and advance."

"I am glad to hear you say so, for this radiant scene, although so perfect, those sheltered groves would satiate me and render me wretched after many days."

"Eternity is not rest except to the weary, and spirits cannot be weary for ever. They may lie passive for a time when exhausted with their efforts, yet they leap up, active and restless, after a time and go on, on, winning fresh conquests, until the next period for rest comes, then they return to the original nest and lie for a time content. Come, I am proud of my home and the laws which governed it while it was above the sea. You have your histories ; we have our living pictures to remind us of the past, and they satisfy

our home cravings. Eternity is perfect—all embracing, all reaching, never beginning, and without an end.”

“Are there marriages amongst you?” next asked Philip, with a certain timidity, for Adela and her child daughter were with him.

While he paused for the reply so did Adela. The child meanwhile had run a little forward to pluck some flowers.

Hesperia turned and looked at them both calmly for a space, and then said quietly,—

“My husband waits for me in our home to-day. We parted only that I might come for you, yet even then we were not parted. Do you imagine that the breath of the Creator would be perfect if divided? Has the River of Purification not yet opened your eyes? Have you any doubts upon the subject?”

“No,” answered Philip, as he turned towards Adela.

“Nor have I,” replied Adela, looking at him with eyes in which love, the eternal, glowed.

“Be satisfied then, and ask no more questions,” said Hesperia. “Mortals sometimes have, on rare occasions, a foretaste of this eternal union, yet theirs is but the shadow of the reality.”

The little maid joined them here with a cluster of white roses in her arms. Her mother meant to have called her Mary, and that was now her name. She now danced before them, happy and unconscious, while they both murmured her name as they clasped hands.

“Mary will find her own mate by and by,” murmured Hesperia, as she led them along the covered ways of this dream-like paradise.

They passed under the branches and leaves of trees that were familiar to them, also under others that were strange, yet all was a bewildering labyrinth of loveliness and intoxication to their newly-awakened senses. The air was balmy and not too hot for comfort, and they felt strangely lightsome and exhilarated, while the joy in each breast was perfect. Yes, they could rest for a time in this olden land of Hesperia. At present they wished for nothing more.

After a space of walking through this broad pathway, which was covered with the softest of sward, they saw the city spread out in front of them through the open gateways; the pillars and walls built of what appeared to be alabaster, and the streets bathed in the glow of the afternoon sun. A gentle rose hue prevailed everywhere, and tinged the marble or alabaster with its faint blush.

It was a city by the sea, for they saw the distant purple of the waters and the glister of the sun upon the minute ripples, for the street was straight from the gateway to the sea.

So they walked from the shadows of the garden into the glory of the golden sun, their eyes dazzled for a moment with the lustre.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CITY OF PEACE.

THE main avenue, into which they had turned before reaching the gateway, was a broad, smooth lawn of the thickest and most carpet-like grass, studded with daisies and cowslips, and over-arched by wide-reaching branches, lined on either side by vast pillar-like trunks, a smooth stretch which filled the mind with refreshment. No ruts of carriage or chariot wheels broke into its evenness, and the feet must have been light and springy that passed over it.

The stream also at this portion of its course had been widened and deepened, and followed the line of the centre avenue, flowing evenly and smoothly towards the city, and through a delicately-sculptured viaduct in the walls, which here became a bridge, broad and spacious; the right hand range of many trunks lined the banks of that limpid river from which the grassy avenue spread.

"I see no signs of horses or carriage traffic here," remarked Philip.

"We do not require carriages nor horses; even when

I was in the flesh we had got past those slow modes of locomotion, although we still keep all the animals ; but they are like ourselves, free from the earth's control. Ages before I was born my people had discovered forces of Nature which superseded steam and electricity, although we had to pass through these primitive modes first, as the moderns are now doing. See, yonder sails the moon, over against where the sun is going down ; by and by you will see the stars light up the darkening space, yet the real sun, moon and stars are hidden from us by layers of rock strata and soil."

"What are these then ?"

"The same as our mountains, valleys, streams, gardens and palaces, embodied emanation from memory. They are real because you can also see them who have no memories to bring to your aid as we have, yet we have, by our powers, embodied the realities for you."

The new-comers looked at the upper sky, where, above the filmy mountains and amid the ambient space, hung a full moon, lemon-tinted and large, while Hesperia continued her revelations.

"The sun and moon are none the losers for our borrowing from them. They still shine as powerfully over the lands above, while we enjoy the materialisation of our memories."

By this time they had passed through the gateway and were in the city, looking round them curiously as strangers will. A fair city it was, with noble buildings lightly designed and rich in carvings, colour and gold, all the more fascinating from the warm lights and violet shadows spread over them from the slowly-setting sun.

It occupied the entire bed of the valley and up the sides of the hills, terrace above terrace, and building over building in bewildering grace and loveliness.

Pillared porticoes and sculptured façades in different marbles, with panels between, where rare works of art in fresco painting and low relief charmed the eyes with their exquisite harmony of colour and chastity of design. The painters and the sculptors must have had patronage enough in those early days when this marvellous outcome of man's minds was first conceived and brought to completion.

The valley at this point was over three miles in width, and from the upper gateway to the bay was nearly six miles, while the nearest mountain tops rose above three thousand feet, yet all this wide space was occupied by buildings, terraces, gardens, wide stairs, broad streets, sculptured masterpieces and columns. The air also was so pure and clear, that from the position where they stood they could look over the entire city and see the sapphire-tinted waters of the bay, now sparkling in myriad golden shafts to the distant horizon, with the purple headlands and grottoes that studded the ocean.

"You still believe in ships," said Philip, pointing to where the masts and sails of fairy-like craft rocked within the harbour bar.

"Yes ; these are our pleasure-boats, as we had them long ago," replied Hesperia, with a satisfied smile, as she saw the wonder depicted on the faces of her visitors.

"We can still enjoy what was once a pleasure to us."

"You eat and drink the same as of yore?"

"Yes ; why not?"

"I have always considered dining to be a purely mundane affair, requiring digestive organs, which are the signs of a condition of decay."

"Food on earth is digested and given back again to the element of reconstruction. It becomes disintegrated with us and returns to its original form. The pleasures

of food and drink are not in the digesting, but in the eating and drinking, with the social advantages of being with those who are with us at the time, and the higher one advances in art and the perception of the gifts of Nature, the more exquisite becomes the pleasure and the keener the taste ; only criminals of the grossest type and savages gorge themselves like ravenous beasts without discrimination. We have brought the gastro-nomic arts like our other arts and pleasures to perfection, as you will prove shortly when we reach my home."

"I saw that you brought us no animal food, as the lower spirits brought to the murderers."

"No. When I was in the flesh we had long given up the taking of life, and made use of only what could be utilised without causing suffering or outraging Nature, for we had discovered that where pleasure is obtained from the violation of Nature, Nature revenges the wrong by giving disease. We had conquered disease as we had removed the sting from death. Besides, there is no flavour in those savage, life-torn dishes which we cannot successfully imitate from the produce of our fields and gardens by the secrets of science, as you will see for yourselves, so why should we stain and clog our spirits with blood and torture?"

It was a city plentifully supplied with water, as Philip could see from the numerous fountains ; each garden had several, as well as small lakes and streams, and all the houses had gardens of ancient date. The lofty palms threw out their feathery fronds from great heights, while tendrils and flowers crept up their rugged and massive trunks, crimsoned with the setting beam. Groves of dark green cedars and myrtles drew the glances from the marble arches and carved columns or statues into deep recesses of cool shadows ; vines

trailed over the walls in free and lavish grace, laden with fruit ; broad marble steps, with balustrades of the same material, lead from the garden up to open courtyards, all inlaid and tessellated, where seats were spread, wrought in curious patterns and shapes, from wood and metals ; rich hangings of tapestry and awnings of silk hung from the open windows and doorways ; long open corridors, with the roofs supported by sculptured pillars, ranged round the buildings, with the upper verandahs all filigreed and festooned with flowers. Turrets and domes reared above these again, their massive strength concealed by the carvings which covered them from base to summit.

The sculptors must have had a labour of love and free hands, with time and material unstinted, for every object that was beautiful in Nature had been reproduced in strong relief and delicate finish ; flowers and tendrils in marble and in bold relief clung round the pillars and cornices, statues of perfect womanhood, youth and childhood met the eye at every turn ; the grotesque, horrible or unnatural had no place in these masterpieces.

Fountains gushed from walls into beautiful basins, to escape from these down artfully-constructed cascades with a silvery splashing. White showers of spray rose into the air and fell like soft mist over the glistening limbs of marble nymphs. In the open streets also these fountains and wells were to be seen at frequent intervals.

The whole bed of the valley was a series of terraces, as were the hills on either side, with flights of broad stairs from one level stretch to the lower level, and in this fashion that principal street descended, as the stream, now a river, did, in a series of cascades and

flowing reaches to the harbour and landing-place where the pleasure galleys were anchored. By this means the river remained fresh until it made its final plunge and joined the ocean.

The city had been raised originally on earth and rock mounds to produce this delicious effect, so that no portion of it could be hidden either from above or from the bay. From the sea it must have looked magnificent, with those countless ranges of steps and those vine-covered walls.

These flat terraces, with their palaces and gardens, ran from hillside to hillside, forming dividing streets, so that the river was spanned by many arched bridges. Wealth and luxury, with refinement surpassing the best days of Greece and Rome, reigned around without one indication of a hovel, or evidence of the labour there must have been to produce these mighty results.

"Who built this city?" inquired Philip, for his companions were silent in their wonderment.

"Ourselves, and this is our pride. While in the flesh we were a nation of workers and servants to each other. We were and still remain a commonwealth of freemen. Some chose to be builders or gardeners, sculptors, painters, authors and musicians, with all the other crafts and sciences that we had brought by ages to perfection. No man, woman nor child could be idle, for the example of work and action was ever before them, and they were carefully trained by masters who were above jealousy and rivalry. No family rose above the other in rank or riches, for we all had what we wanted in life."

"But you had judges and rulers to keep order, I suppose?"

"Yes, and have them still, but not as your rulers are chosen. Our laws were simple and easily understood. There was no chicanery practised. Our rulers were not chosen by favour, supremacy or competition, but by rotation, and in regular order. One hundred men with the same number of women directed our movements for seven days only, and during that interval their hands were free from other work. On the seventh day the citizens assembled in yonder temple of justice, and those next in order took the resigned posts."

She pointed to a vast circular building of white marble which occupied the centre of the city, and covered a space of some acres. It was a great coliseum, surmounted by a dome-like roof, with pillars only for walls. Philip had noticed this mighty erection before, with its wide outside spaces.

"There we assembled weekly, and have met for ages, the flesh-bound and the free. There our simple code of laws are read over and our rulers for the next seven days chosen. There, too, our scientists and inventors expounded their theories and discoveries to all who cared to listen. The dramatists, poets, artists and musicians also gave their performances, recited their works, and did their best to amuse the community, and here also we adored the Source of Life and Knowledge. We had also our private schools and workshops, for every house is so constructed for the different work to be carried on at home."

"Had you no criminals?"

"No; crime and criminals are only produced by injustice, inequality, competition, covetousness, want, idleness, and overwork. We had justice. We were equal. There was no competition amongst us. There

was no opportunity for covetousness. Want was unknown. We had conquered the disease of idleness, and no one did more than he felt disposed to do."

"But some must have done better than others."

"Yes ; but they were ashamed to do less, although no one reproached them for their lack of ability or strength. We regarded such a condition of mind or body as denoting illness, and treated them as invalids, which, of course, they were ; for the healthy man or woman must desire action and employment. Our scientists took such in hand, and quickly cured them."

"Yet you were human then, and if some did not covet their neighbour's possessions, they must sometimes have been rivals in love ?"

Hesperia regarded the questioner with pitying eyes for a moment, and then she said,—

"Ages before I was born my people had discovered the secret knowledge which you have hardly yet grasped, that the breath of God is dual in its first earthly embodiment ; also the test whereby to prove without a doubt when the separated breath again unites. It is only where blindness and ignorance makes mistakes that jealousy can occur, for each pair made for each other is as totally different as one leaf from another, from all other pairs. We had learnt to know our partners when we met, and therefore there was no confusion, for we could no more be deceived in our lovers or our friends. We knew also why we should like some better than others without any blame resting on either side ; and by carefully avoiding our repulsions and keeping to our attractions, we prevented discord and lived all harmoniously in separate circles, which, by combination, could move side by side without friction."

"What a great number of children there are playing in the gardens and courts," said Adela.

"Yes; we educate the children, who, like this little one, leave earth soon," answered Hesperia. "They live with us, and acquire our knowledge, until they have grown up and learn their own sphere of work. That is one of our employments in this land of peace."

They had been walking slowly along as they were speaking, pausing often, and looking around them on the fair prospect. They were by no means alone during this time, for on every terrace and street were crowds of forms, grown-up people of both sexes, surrounded by children, all beautiful, and costumed in the same light and Greek-like attire. The groups, as they passed, looked upon them kindly, but exhibited no curiosity.

"There is my home, and my husband waiting to receive us," said Hesperia, a glad light beaming in her eyes, as they drew near to the open gate of a palace garden, where stood several figures, one of whom advanced to meet them.

"Hesperia!"

"Imenus!"

They called each other by name, looked into each other's eyes and smiled fondly; then he turned to the three visitors and said,—

"Welcome, my friends."

CHAPTER XVIII.

NATURE RELAPSING.

IN this island, where the shipwrecked Anarchists had found a shelter, there was not much variety of climate throughout the year. It was nearly always stormy, pretty generally cold, damp and comfortless ; perhaps on the surface of the globe they could not have been cast upon a more cheerless abode.

Yet the season was coming on when what might be called summer would be with them. They could not tell much difference in the nights, which were tempestuous and Arctic as ever, and tried all severely ; yet as the weeks advanced the days seemed to be a shade warmer, or they were becoming accustomed to their new mode of life.

Amongst the flotsam and jetsam which they had secured were many articles to comfort the hearts of shipwrecked men. Some cases came ashore—wood-covered, tin-lined, and compact—containing dresses, mantles and furs, which gave the ladies great delight, for they had been sadly bedraggled birds before that grateful advent ; and as amongst the articles were a

feminine dressing-case, and some cakes of soap, with other aids to the toilet, including a pocket-mirror, rouge and powders—for the dressing-case and wardrobe had belonged to a professional—they were once more happy.

The men also had good reason to bless these lady adventuresses, for, like most foreigners, they had learnt the art of cooking, and could turn out toothsome dishes with scanty material. Wood was scarce after the boxes and cases had been used up; yet so is fuel on the Continent, and they managed to utilise roots and weeds to serve their purpose so far.

They had good wines, several barrels of beer, brandy, and a case of schnapps. Other provisions there were—biscuits, salt meat, tinned meat of various descriptions, soups; indeed a great number of the articles stored against emergencies in the hold of a floating hotel like the *Rockhampton* drifted into this harbour and were secured and stored from time to time, for the first week, after they had settled down.

Eggs were plentiful, also birds, for both Dennis MacBride and Anatole became skilful hunters; shell-fish were found clinging to the rocks, and if they had to forego their tobacco that was a small item. The gods of destruction were watching over them.

A description of cabbage grew on the island in great quantities, which, with other herbs that the doctor picked out as wholesome, gave them material for soup and salads. All these with the fish in the sea, easy to catch, made them a thousand times more comfortable than they had any right to expect.

Naturally the ladies, accustomed to the attentions of the opposite sex, and who, when not plotting murder, amused themselves with love, or what was considered that passion by their society, set themselves diligently

to cultivate and practise the only occupation left to them on this almost-deserted island. Anatole was the favourite, for he was debonair and handsome, but he had fixed his amorous glances on the golden-haired Countess de Bergamont, so that the princess and baroness had to content themselves with being rivals for the favours of the red-haired and gigantic savage Dennis.

Dr Fernandez was out of their calculations, for he had no inclination towards beauty or vice as represented in female guise. He could have seen and appreciated the beauty and completeness of a charge strong enough to scatter over the Thames, Westminster and the Houses of Parliament, or send St Paul's sky-high in one fell and right instant when these buildings were properly crammed with dignitaries on some great state occasion, such as the Queen's Jubilee ceremony. Such an invention properly carried out would indeed be soul-enthraling and dramatic, but to listen to or to have to flatter a woman was to him weariness unutterable, therefore he left this pastime to those who seemed to like it, and betook himself to thinking instead.

He walked a great deal and alone, as these spare, bilious men must do to keep in health, looking about him for botanical, genealogical and other subjects of interest, and in these pursuits perhaps time passed more quickly with this strange demoniac nature than it did with the others.

The variety of insects interested him with their peculiarities of form, different from what he had seen anywhere else. Very few of them were capable of flying. Some of their shapes were also grotesque in the extreme. He collected a great number of these, and

kept himself in practice for larger victims by putting them to death in his own cold-blooded and investigating fashion.

He made the acquaintance of sea-elephants, sea-leopards, and other members of the seal family, stalking them carefully and spearing them with a harpoon which he had found in the carpenter's box, or braining them with the carpenter's adze when he could get close enough. He found these animals at times far up the fjords as well as on the seashore. Altogether he had opportunities of pursuing his choice occupation of murder even here.

He was living, as they all were, in hopes of being rescued as the season advanced by some sealer or whaler, and they had their story made up. They were to represent themselves as passengers of a sailing vessel from America to Australia, driven out of their course and wrecked here. It would not be difficult to impose on these daring but simple-minded sailors, and get a passage back to Europe. Any point of landing would suit them, for they had secret agents almost everywhere that commerce and money existed.

He took long walks, during the daylight, inland, and explored the country on the side of the island where they had been cast, satisfying himself that this was where ships would most likely put in, climbing the mountains as high as he dared go amongst the snow, which on the heights never melted, although the dampness of the atmosphere rendered it rotten and dangerous. As he explored he came upon many fossilised remains of trees, which proved how abundant the forest must have been at one time on these hills and valleys, although now so barren of such life. It was

an interesting country to a scientist, although he felt that, as Darwin felt about Australia, he would not regret bidding it a long adieu.

It is interesting, although not at all singular, to watch how quickly attachments spring up between people who are thrown together, yet isolated from the rest of the world, and how much more tender and real these enforced attachments become.

The Countess de Bergamont on board the steamer had been courted and made much of in a flippant way, but it was reserved for Anatole to discover that the rich gold of her magnificent tresses had been bestowed upon her by Dame Nature, instead of being the gift of art, and this fact none of her other lovers had ever been certain of—even her late lord and master would not like to have sworn to its genuineness.

As the weeks rolled on, however, Anatole had proof positive, for that the dressing-case of the actress contained none of this fashionable tint the poor baroness slowly but surely showed to all observers. Her tresses, formerly lustrous and radiant, began to dim at the ends and show black at the roots, a singular contrast of colour that was not becoming.

The countess, however, with her natural burnish, and the princess with her pale flaxen continued exactly the same. Anatole remarked this with all a man's delight over trifles, and was tempted to look closer.

Then he discovered that her eyes were more clearly blue than any he had ever gazed into before, and that they could melt with what appeared real tenderness and sentiment. True he had never taken so much time to study eyes before, for his life had been restless and busy, and his pleasures snatched with haste.

The rouge and powder of the actress did not last long

amongst three. There was a more plentiful supply of soap tablets, and water was pure and plentiful in this region. These, with the keen air and enforced exercise, did more in the way of beautifying those jaded complexions than any cosmetics could have done.

The countess was undoubtedly a beautiful woman, as were her two sisters in adversity, in their different styles, but Eugene was the freshest and youngest looking, having a superb constitution which was soon able to recover its tone now that the excitements and excesses of her former existence were removed. Work did for her what narcotics could only partially do formerly with so much after-injury. Her development was perfect and almost ideal. Her habits, like her hands and feet, were refined and charming.

In her days of popularity she would not have given Anatole a moment of consideration, for he was but an ordinary, good-looking young fellow, with no very brilliant parts and not too much brains.

But he was good-looking and handsomely made, as well as active, with strong muscles, great endurance, and without doubt was the most unselfish and obliging man of the three.

In a state of primitive society wit is not so greatly admired as strength and personal courage. The white-faced and imp-like cynic may appear a remarkably fine fellow and a leader in the drawing-room and fashionable clubs of cultured society, but he is regarded as a sorry object amongst savages, and very quickly clubbed and laid at rest. Dr Fernandez was the society hero, but Anatole took the cake in Comprado Island to the eyes of Venus.

Eugene had watched his heroic efforts to reach the cliff top with approving terror. It was different to

watch a comrade struggling against death on the face of a giddy precipice to flinging a bomb amongst enemies—the one was a painful and lingering effort, the other merely the devastating work of an instant.

She had watched him divest himself of his clothing on the seashore, as she shivered so wretchedly herself, and wondered how anyone could be so brave as to divest themselves on such a day, and when she saw him plunge into the icy waves she could not withhold her admiration and wonder at his resolution. She had watched him as he returned with his shapely body glowing and pink, and, even as the savagest of women would have done, she remembered these details.

It was their present surroundings which wrought the change in both natures ; but now, as time passed on and each had leisure to mark the qualities of the other—the qualities which their positions alone brought out—they became natural and sentimental. They thought little of the cause to which they had devoted their lives and more of each other. They were actually becoming simple savages, prepared to vow and believe in fidelity and love, instead of being the wretched devotees of the great god "Nothing."

Dennis MacBride, however, remained in the same condition that he had always been in—a developed brute of the Bill Sykes order. He was gigantic and powerful, with a hand like a sledge-hammer, and a brain of the compass of the gorilla, and these women, who had tasted refinement and trifled with cultured men, were only women to him to caress or thrash as the mood seized him, therefore he lorded it over them and was as masterful and as coarse as a wild boar with a couple of sows who had attached themselves to him.

He did not care much how they adorned themselves

—pigs do not pay much attention to decoration—neither did he study their feelings in the slightest degree. He would have fought for them to the death, of course, and gored the enemy properly, but in the lair he ruffled them with royal disregard.

Singular to say these women who had passed through saloons and mocked courtly gentlemen, who had suffered tribulations and persecutions with a fierce and bitter hatred, who had both lectured about the rights of woman, sworn to destroy tyrants, defied all superstition and fetish-worship, now bent the knee in meek and lowly servitude to as vile a tyrant, as coarse a monster, as ever frightened and cowed the spirit of woman.

They hated each other with malignant yet unrevealed hatred, all on account of this ferocious beast who treated them both with equal favour. They fawned upon this red-haired monster as if he had been a god; they abased themselves to please him, and spoke to each other as if they had been loving sisters when he was near, while Dr Fernandez, the Anarchist, laughed to himself as he watched the antics of these disciples of Liberty, Atheism and Reason, who were behaving exactly as primitive savages would have done who have never enjoyed the benefits of civilisation. Truly it does not take humanity long to hark back to the flint stage if it gets a fair chance like this.

It is so easy for the best bred, most expensively-educated woman who has the taste to mate with an ignorant boor to become as great and almost as ignorant a troll as if he had picked her up originally from the dyke-side. The quarter of a short lifetime is often enough to make her forget even the rudiments of her cultivation, more than enough to make her forget her manners.

And it is the same with the man as with the woman, if he comes down really to the level of his mate, only while women do become more subordinate and adaptable as time goes on, men more often awake to disgust after the first glamour of love has worn off.

Looking at the effect of this short space of time on individuals, as we have seen it for ourselves, the easy lapsing from cultivation into the fallow stage, and the force of constant communication and surroundings, we no longer wonder at the changes which have taken place in races. How the most civilised nations have come to lose and forget their arts, sciences, refinements and histories, and become by degrees once again skin-covered, flint-using savages, with only a glimmering of the past left in the shape of superstitions and myths. How quickly does a neglected garden become a wilderness!

Yet knowing all this, we also know that the soil too often used, too finely cultivated, must be ploughed over and left lying fallow to the weeds or what else likes to flourish over it until it can regain its original vigour, and so also super-refined and worn races must get fresh blood and become obliterated for a time after they have reached a certain stage for the sake of the unborn and new.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "GEORGE WASHINGTON" COMES.

THE Countess de Bergamont laughed in her fashion-battered heart as she watched the slavery of her world-worn sisters towards their uncouth monster. She laughed, as the doctor did, at the new emotions that were stirring within herself, even while she did not try to resist them. It was all so Arcadian, so foolishly fresh, and yet so delicious that she would not, even if she could, have crushed them. They were like violets and other early spring flowers budding through the snow, fragile and short-lived perhaps, yet so precious while they lasted.

It was so curious, she who had been kissed so often to feel this fluttering of the heart, this virginal tremour over the kisses of Anatole. Why should her lips become so moist and sensitive when his lips approached hers who had ran the gamut of fiery lips? Why should she be contented to lie in his arms on this bleak shore, or in that damp cave, and look into his eyes as if eternity brooded within their brown depths? She had looked into many brown, black, blue and grey eyes before, simulating the

raptures that she now felt. She had listened with her pink ears pressed against many hearts to the throbbing of passion without more than a secondary response. How was it that now the heart thuds made her own heart bound and throb with an intoxication that would not pass? His arms were shapely and strong, and his flesh firm and warm, but no firmer nor warmer than other arms which had encircled her, yet his had a new magic which she had not felt before. How came it to pass? she wondered, as she lay in his arms and looked into his eyes with her own flashing the full delight of her being for the first time really woke.

"Would that I could die now," she murmured brokenly, as her dewy lips lay half open upon his, and he felt the same wish.

Strange that passion when complete should long for death, when life seems to be the only basis which can continue it.

They were all in the little cavern now, which, through the exertions of the hunters with the seals, had been made more comfortable. They no longer lay on the damp earth, but had thick, smooth furs to cover them and to rest upon. It was night outside, dark and dismal, and inside also reigned darkness, for the dying embers of their fire emitted only a dull crimson that gave out no light. They had dined fairly well, and the doctor lay in his corner alone and seemingly asleep, although his breathing could not be heard.

That Dennis was asleep could be heard plainly enough, for no wild boar in his lair ever grunted or snorted so powerfully. His devoted slaves also may have been asleep, for they lay subdued and silent

enough, only Eugene and her sailor lover were awake, feeling that the world was their own.

An overpowering tenderness was upon them both, as perhaps the tiger and tigress may feel at times when they have retired from their repast. She was womanly and incapable of evil, he was uplifted and heroic, and both felt as if heaven's hosts were bending over them.

In her heart she knew that if ever he returned he would be doomed for his mistake. How empty all these projects were to her at this moment; how much better it would be to forget the world—all her wrongs and hatreds—and keep this man to herself. Could they not steal away together, and hide themselves in some other part of the island until their companions left. Here they might endure cold and privations, but they need not fear the long arm and dagger-holding hand of the Red Terror to which they had pledged themselves. Here they would be beyond its reach, for they would be alone with each other.

Love and nature had played strange havoc with her heart lately, since she could prefer ice, snow and want, to keep this man all to herself.

"Darling! Are you asleep?"

"No, Eugene," he whispered softly.

"Let us leave them to-morrow, my dearest love, and conceal ourselves till they go. We can manage to live even here, and I desire no more, only to live with you and for you."

"Yes, we shall go to-morrow," he murmured, as his head sank on her soft breast, while she held him jealously close with her smooth white arms.

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The next morning Anatole announced, at breakfast,

his intention of going for a day or two's exploration, and it did not surprise any of them when the countess said she would accompany him.

"I'd like to make a third of your party," said the doctor, "only that now we may expect the sealing vessels any day, and we must look out for them; therefore you two go, and be back within a week, if at all possible. Go south-west, for I have read that there is an active volcano and hot springs in that direction, and the island is only some seventy or eighty miles from coast to coast. You will have to walk fast to keep your blood in circulation as you pass over those lofty and rugged ridges; therefore you ought to cover the distance within a week or ten days at the most. I am deeply interested in that volcano and these geysers, so pay great attention to objects as you pass along."

"We'll tell you all about the volcano when we come back," replied Anatole, as he packed up what he thought would be most needful for them.

"They will never come back," thought the doctor, as he watched their preparations quietly. "They mean to give us the slip, and it will be as well for themselves if they stay away or die *en route*, for I perceive that they are both renegades, and I have no desire to execute them for their half-heartedness if it can be avoided. On this barren land they can do us no harm; only they had better not indulge in any home-sickness, or they will be doomed to extinction. Who could have thought that the countess would ever have given way to this sublime idiocy of love after all her experiences."

He watched this infatuated pair go off, carrying their baggage mutually divided, for Eugene insisted on bearing her share, and laughed gaily and proudly as she squared her magnificent shoulders before the

load that had been arranged, knapsack-fashion, on her back, to prove how little she cared for such a burden. Anatole, lover-like, had remonstrated with her for carrying anything, but one bright flash of those appealing and brilliant blue eyes forced him to yield to her whim. She had given up the refinements of life for love's dear sake, and was going to brave hardship and live the life of natural womanhood, and she was too proud of the strength which enabled her to do it to forego one item of this new pleasure. To suffer and sacrifice are true passion's pleasures.

Dr Fernandez watched them leaving the camp with a sardonic smile on his thin lips and a mocking gleam in his dark eyes. He was one of those gifted individuals who had a wonderful talent for planting stings and saying disagreeable things at the most telling moment, and was as perfectly free from the weakness of generosity as he was beyond pity or mercy, yet he refrained on that occasion, and left unuttered the many clever barbed words that hovered on his envenomed tongue, and looked bilious and melancholy instead, as he bade them a quiet farewell, and waved his white hand languidly after them as they turned to go. Their sentence was fixed in his dark mind if they ever came back, and he was artistic enough to admire the animal beauty and vigour of both victims as they went forth with elastic tread.

The countess was tall for a woman, and the past weeks had hardened her. On this morning she had borrowed from the wardrobe of the late actress a pair of high boots, with short skirts, and a seal-skin tight-fitting jacket; a little seal cap was also on her golden tresses, which she had coiled up in Greek fashion. She was a graceful woman, who knew how to dress, who

had learnt how to walk, and therefore looked charming, happy, and like a lady who is prepared for an Alpine expedition.

Anatole also looked well, yet not so well as when he was less dressed. He had muffled himself in a rough pilot jacket, which made him appear shorter and stouter, with a pair of high sea-boots, under which his blue trousers were stuffed. He was not so gay as his companion, for men cannot cover their emotions so completely as women can, and he had a sneaking fondness for the comrades he was forsaking, which made him regard the parting with regret.

"*Bon voyage!*" cried the doctor, as he stood at the cave entrance and watched them go off.

"Take care of yourselves!" cried Dennis and his two obedient slaves, and then the business of the day began for those that were left, while the new Adam and Eve went out to find their heritage.

The sun showed its disc for the first time since they had landed—a watery and wan orb amongst the clouds, yet holding forth a promise of warmer days to come.

This gleam cheered the fond travellers on their way, as they passed along the cliff tops and followed the inland course of the fjord.

They were going south-west, towards the lofty ranges which towered, glittering white, in the distance. They intended to keep on that course for a time, and then return to the first cave and watch until their companions had gone away. After that they would live as they best could until some other ship came and picked them up.

"We will go to some of the islands of the South Seas, Anatole, and there make a home for ourselves, where we will be forgotten," said Eugene enthusiastically.

"Will you be content with such a savage existence?" inquired Anatole, with a half doubt in his tone.

"Thoroughly. Do you think the doctor is a fool, my own love?"

"No; but why that question?"

"Because he permitted us to go without giving me any private instructions concerning you."

"Well, what of that?"

"He suspects me, as well as you, of disaffection to the Cause, and has now given us both our last chance of escape. When he returns to Europe, we will be marked with the fatal cross. There is not a city or centre of civilisation in the world where we can be safe after that, only a wilderness such as this is, or in some tropic island where commerce with the outer world is unknown. Here, my love, we are safe and at liberty to live and die as we like best, and for that I shall ever adore this bleak and lonely land."

"We must get away from it, however, somehow, Eugene, for I doubt if we could live through its winter."

"Never mind the winter; summer is coming to us, and sufficient for my day is the good thereof," she answered merrily, striding alongside of him like a good comrade, and ignoring the burden on her shoulders as if it had been nothing.

They followed the course of the fjord for many miles, as it was fringed with high cliffs, watching it gradually become narrower as it approached the mountains, and when night fell upon them, they found themselves at the entrance of a steep gorge, down which a tumultuous and roaring torrent rushed. Here, selecting a spot sheltered from the wind between some high boulders, they made their camp, fairly satisfied with their day's

fatigue, and happy that they were together and so far away from the others.

It was not many hours after the truants had left that the wishes of Dr Fernandez were realised. They had just finished their mid-day meal when they saw the welcome sails of a schooner bear in sight, and soon afterwards they had the pleasure of watching her tack in between the rocks to their fine and sheltered natural harbour, and drop her anchor almost opposite to where they waited.

The *George Washington*, from New York, was the name of this Antarctic cruising schooner, and she had on board as hardy a set of sea-heroes as ever worked a ship through stormy waters.

The captain, three mates, and a dozen of tried seamen, comprised her crew—crafty hunters of seals and whales. This was their usual headquarters for the season just now beginning.

They gave the shipwrecked party a kindly and hearty greeting, listened to their fictitious story with credulity, and without demur promised to give them a free passage home in return for their assistance during the fishing season, which they gladly promised.

At the doctor's advice, his companions said nothing about the two absentees. He told them that he had heard the countess and her lover plotting during the night to go away and abandon the Cause, therefore that they were not likely to come back; so that it would be only causing delay to tell these humane men about others being on the land. Their main object now was to get off themselves.

They threw themselves with energy into the work, which suited both the doctor and Dennis, while the

ladies made themselves agreeable to the sealers, and attended to their comfort, so that they soon became friends, and were treated with every mark of confidence and respect.

For three months they hunted and fished with good success, filling their barrels with oil and their holds with skins ; and having fairly good weather during that time, for the sun came out and warmed the land, making it bloom with mosses, ferns and grass, and appear almost a pleasant place to live in.

A great number of seals fell before these skilled trappers, so that when they left the shores there was much mourning amongst the seal families at this wholesale slaughter, and doubtless many discussions with the survivors whether an emigration farther south was not advisable ; already they were becoming more wary and scarcer than they had been in former years.

Still the Countess de Bergamont and Anatole remained absent, and the doctor was pleased that he had said nothing about them. They would not come now.

At last the ship was loaded up and the hatches securely battened down, then the crew and their dangerous guests went on board, and, hoisting their anchor, they sailed away once again to torment and destroy their unsuspecting fellow-beings.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MARRIAGE OF PHILIP AND ADELA.

"You are satisfied now that you two were made for each other, and that you are one soul now?"

"Yes, oh yes; we have no longer a single doubt. Who could have after what we have seen and heard?"

It was Hesperia who asked the final question to Philip and Adela as the three stood in the test chamber—a small chamber made of the purest crystal, through which they could see the sky above and around them, for they were on the top of the most elevated dome.

The silver moon hung above them and poured its white lustre through and through their globe-shaped chamber with a thrilling and strange intensity. The stars and planets appeared magnified, and glowing like search-lights, until they seemed lapped round by white flame.

And amidst that heatless flame their innermost thoughts and souls had been laid bare to each other's scrutiny until not a secret, past, present or to come, remained. Each read his and her own flaws in the

other, or rather, each imperfection in the one had its antidote in the other, which makes the eternal unity.

"You know now, that separate, no spirits can be perfect; you know now that evil is only evil apart from its antidote, as the component parts of air are poisonous when separated, joined, they are health-giving; apart from each other you were faulty and frail, as mortals all are, together, you become complete, the perfected image of God."

"Yes; we know this now."

"You are indissolubly united from this hour henceforth and for ever. One cannot think or move without the other, and after this, being really one, although retaining your separate individualities, as we all do, you will be able to work for and think about others, for that is the result of perfect love; it is no longer selfish."

"Yes," replied the docile and happy pair.

"We have a marriage ceremony here as you had on earth. Not that the ceremonial adds to the fact, yet, like the garnishing of a dish, or the decoration of a table or chamber, it satisfies the senses and increases the pleasure."

"Yes, I should like to go through the ceremony," replied Adela, woman-like, while Philip also nodded his assent, trusting, at the same time, man-like, that it might not be too elaborate.

"Come, then, and be prepared," said Hesperia, adding, as she turned to Philip,—"It is a simple ceremony this of the consecration of a united soul to the service of its great Author, and will soon be over."

She led them from the crystal dome down the narrow and winding stairs up which they had gone together. At the bottom of this staircase, which widened as they

went down, they were met by the twelve youths and twelve maidens, headed by the husband of Hesperia. They were in a corridor now of white marble, softly carpeted, and lighted with globes of rose-tinted flame.

"Come with me, Adela ; you go with Imenus, Philip," said Hesperia, taking Adela by the hand and leading her one direction, followed by the twelve bridesmaids, while Philip went with Imenus and the youths in another.

This corridor seemed to be within the central dome, for it was rounded at the top and ran in a circle, while the chambers were all in the centre. Into one of the many doors Imenus conducted Philip, who found himself in a dressing chamber, where stood a bath filled with fragrant and tepid water.

There was nothing different in this bathroom from bathrooms he had been into before, except that it was perhaps more Oriental and luxurious in its fittings. Also the costume which he saw laid out for him was different to what he had been accustomed, although similar to that worn by this ancient race.

A fillet of gold lay ready to bind his brow and dark hair, with a girdle of the same material for his waist. Gem-encrusted sandals also stood ready for his feet, with the snowy tunic and mantle.

"This is my marriage costume, I suppose," he remarked a little dubiously as he regarded these innovations.

"Yes," replied Imenus.

"It is simple and rich, and, I expect, easy to wear when once put on properly. Well, I shall be glad to get out of these stiff, conventional clothes of the nineteenth century."

"You are out of them, my friend," answered his guide. "To desire a thing with us is to accomplish it."

"Upon my word, so I am," said the astonished Philip, as he surveyed his nude form in the large mirror. "Well, here goes for a plunge in this fragrant fluid. A bath, after all, is not one of the least pleasures in life."

Imenus and the young men assisted him with his toilet. After his wash they anointed him with perfumed oils and rubbed him down carefully, he submitting with the best grace in the world to their manipulations; then they combed and brushed out his dark hair, which he had worn rather long, it being naturally curly and thick, and, after dressing him, led him to the mirror to survey himself.

He had entered that chamber an Englishman—he now stood smiling at the reflection of a young Atlantian. Yes, he had to own that he did like the change both for ease and appearance. He had not considered before how much better the human feet looks in sandals than in boots, if they are not deformed. His were shapely feet, with full toes and good nails, and as they were now carefully trimmed and clean he regarded them with pardonable pride, and hoped Adela would also like the change.

"Come, let us be first in the wedding-chamber, before your bride arrives, for the guests are already assembled," said Imenus, leading the way out.

"Where are my my old clothes?" asked Philip, looking about him for these articles.

"Dissolved, until you require them again," answered Imenus, with a smile.

"You don't require to carry much luggage, I see."

“None; we make our costume as we require it—a very simple and easy process, like the taking off.”

Philip laughed at this rejoinder as they went along, the two arm and arm, like good friends, and the young men following. Hesperia was much more philosophical and grave in her manner than her husband, Imenus, and seemed, if anything, to be the superior half of this harmonious whole; but Imenus was gayer in his disposition, and more companionable. Philip already had enjoyed some conversation with him, and was prepared to enjoy his company amazingly—they were *en rapport*.

He had been one of the great painters of his age, a kind of superior Raphael, as he had been better taught than that gifted, yet somewhat faulty, master. He had shown Philip a few of his masterpieces, or rather Hesperia had, for she was as proud of her husband's marvellous gifts as he was modest; and Philip, who was no mean artist, had been struck dumb with admiration. He had seen Raphael's supposed masterpieces in the National Gallery of England, over which the trustees of the nation had squandered twenty thousand pounds of the nation's money, yet here stood a master of the same school as Raphael, who had lived and worked ages before him, and mentally he had drawn a comparison between the two men and their works.

“Do not despise the Italian, for he was a pupil and child of mine, and did great work, with the disadvantages he laboured under,” said this gentle master of Atalanta. “The art of drawing had become lost in his days, colour also was but feebly felt, yet he was a great and a receptive soul. One day before you leave us, for you must fulfil your own destiny of usefulness, I shall introduce you to some great painters who have

lived from my time down to yours. We still have our art and our literary evenings, for my Hesperia was a great philosopher and poetess in her day, and therefore naturally attracts the kindred spirit. I am not much of a speaker—painters seldom are—but she can do that for me.”

Philip thrilled at this promise. His idea of heaven had been the meeting of those great minds who had gone before. The painters—Titian, Tintoretto, Rembrandt; the sculptors of early Greece; the poets—Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Coleridge, Byron, Burns. To behold and converse with them, almost his own contemporaries, with a glimpse of the older giants—Socrates, Plato, Confucius, Guatamos, Bacon, Bunyan—ah, yes, he would like one hour with honest John of Bedford, the man who had faith enough to move mountains. Bunyan, the inspired man of the people, who, without education or polish, yet ascended to such lofty heights of intuition and foresight. Burns, the man also of the people, who had the true poet’s ear for Nature’s melody. He could worship both these sons of God as he did this refined and cultured painter of the past ages—this Imenus, who cared so little for his rare culture, yet valued the God-gift that had enabled him to tower above his fellows.

Philip Mortlake was unconsciously a hero worshipper. Raphael’s name had become a tradition to him. The name of the greater Imenus was an unknown one, therefore did not inspire him for the present with the same awe. He was a beautiful young man in appearance, with a broad, low brow and clustering dark locks, with sunny, brown eyes and laughing lips, yet across the young brows lay tiny lines of thought, and in the sunny eyes a strength of purpose and a god-like ideal;

the laughing lips also trembled as much with divine instincts as with harmless mirth, for great painters are like children, they laugh while they watch the mysteries of eternity.

Do fond mothers ever think, while they watch those innocents on their laps laughing at the blue skies above them, how much more the baby knows and sees than they do? The dog and the cat also see what the baby does, although not so much, only the baby forgets and loses its gift when it begins to learn the ways of earth, but the dog and the cat see with their limited vision all their lives, and do not wonder.

Philip had seen a good portion of the interior of the place—the magnificent entrance hall and some of the reception rooms, as they entered. They had partaken of a slight collation, similar to what they would have done on earth's surface.

Now they were going back again, through cool and lighted halls, with these rare masterpieces on either side of them, of sculpture and painting, the exquisite tapestries and unique specimens of ceramic and floral decorations. It was all so precious, so unique, so perfect.

By and by they were ushered into the apartment where the wedding guests waited; a great assemblage they were, although Philip was too agitated to see much of them at this time, for he felt himself to be the centre of observation.

A vast hall spread out before him, with courtly guests ranged round and conversing in groups. Philip felt, as he walked towards the dais where the final ceremony was to be enacted, that immortals were looking at him, and therefore felt confused.

"Courage, my friend," whispered Imenus. "You are the same as the greatest here, for the renown

which they won on earth counts for nothing here. We are all equals."

Philip had the modesty to walk up to the daïs without looking round. Here, when he had taken the place indicated for him, he waited with downcast eyes.

From the gallery at the far end of the hall soft strains of music rolled—those sweet, chaotic strains which are the prelude to a grand burst of melody.

Even now it has burst out in a joyous chorus, and Philip lifts his eyes to see his beauteous bride approaching, costumed, like Hesperia, in white, with roses on her breast and amongst her rich tresses, accompanied by Hesperia and the bevy of lovely girls, and at the sight his heart thrilled with love and pride as he advanced to meet her.

The ceremony was simple and yet impressive. When the music had ceased, Hesperia stepped upon the daïs and, after uttering a prayer of gratitude to the Creator of this perfection and felicity, gave a short address of welcome to the spirits, who were then at last united and complete.

Philip noticed that her prayer and after words differed from all earthly prayer, for she asked for no more favours from the great Source ; she only expressed thanks for what had been given.

The pair were now kneeling hand in hand, when Hesperia, who acted as priestess, took from a table beside her a piece of bread, and, breaking it in two, gave a half to Philip and the other half to Adela. She next handed to them a cup of wine to drink from in solemn silence, and when they had drank she retired from the daïs and, kneeling beside them, waited with bent head, as did all the spectators.

A subtle and strange perfume gradually wafting

towards him caused Philip to glance up, when he saw before him on the dais a thin, white vapour hovering, and in its centre the form of a young and bearded man of about thirty-four, with grave and gentle face and lamb-like eyes, bending over them, with hands outstretched as in the act of blessing.

For a moment this benign figure hung over them tenderly, while a breathless silence reigned throughout the hall, and then the vapour shrouded the figure, and in its turn gradually vanished, and the dais was, as before, empty.

From the choir of young and trained voices in the gallery now pealed a pæan of rejoicing and congratulation, the wedding hymn of the celestials, aided by harps and other instruments. The ceremony was over, and Philip and Adela were now husband and wife.

CHAPTER XXI.

TRAITORS AT WORK.

WHEN a man has done another a very great favour he naturally gets to like him, and reposes confidence in him. He is apt to make him free of his house and secrets, and treat him as if there had been a long-standing friendship between them. He considers that, if safe anywhere, he must be safe with the man he has befriended.

Whether the confidence so naturally reposed is justified by results is a doubtful question which has often been replied to in the negative. It all depends upon the nature of the man befriended. To bestow a benefit denotes a generous nature ; to receive a benefit means nothing. The recipient may be a mean and malignant recipient of grace, without a spark of grace himself, or he may have nobility enough to feel, in its great and sacred meaning, the obligation.

Dr Fernandez and his three companions had received the greatest favour that human beings can receive from their fellows, and which ought to have rendered them staunch and loyal, even in spite of their faithless and bitter creed ; and their honest, if rough, benefactors

felt towards them all the warmth, generosity and friendship, which was the natural reflection of their own charity and pity.

But Dr Fernandez and his evil comrades belonged to a school of genuine haters, but very faithless and treacherous livers.

They received the favour with feigned gratitude, and paid for their passage and board with protestations and amiability, all the while despising these rough fellows and coveting the possession of their property.

They had plotted and discussed the matter in the cavern before going on board, and now only waited a fair opportunity of putting their wicked plots into execution, for they intended nothing less than a repetition of their game on board the *Rockhampton*. They meant to get the *George Washington* into their own hands and put the unsuspecting crew to death. Like the pirates of old they believed, in the safety to themselves, of dead men.

True, they were sixteen men to two men and two women ; the Anarchists also had none of their favourite compounds handy, which would have made their task easy even against these long odds.

But the doctor was a first-class chemist, and the captain carried a well-stocked medicine chest, so that what could not be done without dynamite might be accomplished by poison.

The sealers had a long voyage before them before they could discharge cargo, a great portion of the South Pacific Ocean to sail over before reaching Cape Horn and the Atlantic. Four long months lay between them and New York city even if the winds were favourable, longer if they chanced to have bad weather.

They had, however, provisions enough to carry them all the way, with a good condensing machine on board, so that they had no intention of calling at any intermediate port; however, their forced guests declared themselves perfectly content with the arrangement. New York would suit them as well as any other port, for from there they could get across to England and the Continent. The doctor stated that he had friends in New York who would supply them with the needful funds, and the captain was quite satisfied with this statement.

They had a jovial enough time on board, as the ladies helped to vary the monotony. They had transferred their attentions from Dennis at his and the doctor's special commands, which fell in with their own fickle inclinations, to the mates and seamen. The captain having a wife at home to whom he had been attached for over a quarter of a century they left alone.

Captain Abraham Wheeler was a hardy old sea-dog of nearly sixty years of age, grizzled and stalwart; he was well accustomed to the ice-floes both of the north and south polar regions; a Yankee who liked to make good bargains, and was reckoned to be rather hard, as well as dogged and strict in his ideas of discipline at sea, but hearty in his notions of hospitality, and guileless as a child, despite his affectation of Yankee cuteness.

His mates and crew were all picked men with whom he had sailed many a voyage, and therefore he had cause to trust them. Besides this they all had an interest in the present venture and vessel, taking shares in the profits instead of wages.

It was a kind of commonwealth concern, which might well have appealed to the socialistic principles of these

Anarchists ; that is, if any community outside their own could have appealed to them. These sailors were democratic to the back-bone, and none of them had pretensions of belonging to the doomed class of capitalists, since they worked for their own hands and divided fairly what profits they made out of their trade. They were democrats and socialists, but they believed in a deity, and repudiated murder and sneaking acts of violence ; therefore they were as much enemies to these Anarchists as if they had been wealthy capitalists or bloated aristocrats. They liked work also, which was the abhorrence of the others.

Father Abraham, as his crew called him, was hospitable, confiding, and free with his guests, but when once his anchor was weighed and his sails spread, he limited them in their sphere of action and put them strictly on the liberties of passengers. He was the ship's master, purser, and doctor as well, kept his medicine chest under lock and key in his own cabin, and would allow no interference in any of these departments, which he regarded as his own.

"I guess you air a smart medical professor on dry land," he said, when the doctor offered his services, "but I know the constitutions of my men and what they want when they are afloat."

"But surely you will not object to me looking after my own friends, captain ?"

"Not at all, doctor. When you want any drugs, tell me what they are, and the quantity required, and I'll sarve you out the dose. I was in a drug store myself once upon a time, in my young days, before I took to the sea, so I calculate that I do know a fair amount about drugs and measurements. You write out the prescription and I'll sarve out."

"Damnation!" said Dr Fernandez to his comrades. "He knows a great deal too much about medicines for me to take what I require while he is awake, yet he has got what is needed in that chest, so we must get his keys when he is asleep some time."

There was no hurry yet, for they did not intend seizing the ship until they had passed the equator, then they could run her into one of the foreign states and get her repainted and refitted. Better a wooden schooner than nothing at all to ship their stuff about.

The two ladies, acting on their instructions, made themselves interesting and sweet to all on board, from the apprentice boy to the first mate. These Americans were puritanical and modest men, therefore these experienced coquettes found their task easy if a little wearisome, for to look pleasant and gracious and to keep in hand a dozen simple men with sentimental and platonic blandishments was child's play to those old stagers in the trade of love.

Each man thought himself the favourite of the syren he himself inclined towards; it was only her amiability that made her so gracious to the others. Hadn't they found opportunities to cast into each of those easily deluded eyes, with a shy tenderness and modest candour, shafts that rankled in the susceptible hearts. Oh, the truthful candour, the modesty, the shy tenderness of the expert, who has long ago forgotten what these sensations mean. They can beat Nature hollow. Innocence betrays itself sometimes, calculating vice, never.

They had weeks of rough and stormy seas, of which these soft witches made capital with the softer-hearted but robust men, when it seemed but manly and right to place an arm round the delicate waist to prevent

the owner stumbling and falling, when it could not look intentional if she leaned heavily against the pea-jacket or rough home-spun jersey. They were such delicate and refined creatures, and seemingly so unconscious of the heart thuds which the contact of their soft bodies caused during these chance encounters.

The conspirators could speak in Italian, which none of the Americans understood, and discuss matters even at the dinner table in the cabin, for Dennis had mastered enough to be able to follow their meaning, although he could not speak it well, therefore he listened to his instructions stolidly, as he ate heavily of the *George Washington* provisions, while the others discussed murder and black treachery with smiling lips and gently-sounding words. It is a sweet language, the Italian.

They were, however, too polite and wary to indulge too often in these conversations. There was no necessity, for the time was not yet ripe, and they could see that their host looked awkward while this talk was going on. The doctor sometimes had occasion to warn one of the two women to be careful or more general with her attentions, since they were women, and even the falsest are apt to have preferences. He kept his keen black eyes on the watch to see that nothing like preference should occur. When the time arrived, the ones who should chance to be on the watch should have the preference, but not until then.

They had not much comfort on board until the vessel had rounded Cape Horn; then, as they altered their course to northwards, every day made a change, the seas grew quieter, and the deck more solid under the feet, for the trade winds were strong and steadfast.

By and by these also fell off and grew uncertain as they sailed into the doldrums, and from there into the latitude of deadly calms and fiery sunbeams, when the ship lies rocking on a still blue mirror, and the pitch boils out from the seams, and sailors whistle for the wind that is so tardy in the coming. The hour for action was approaching,

"They say that petticoats are unlucky on board a ship, but I guess that you have brought us luck, ladies," said the gallant old tar, as they began to move after only ten days of stagnation. "I have lain dead still on these waters for four and five weeks at a spell before we could get a puff like this is."

Unfortunate skipper, to congratulate these she-demons who may have brought the evil wind which meant death to him and his honest crew.

In his jubilation at this good luck, he called for an extra supply of rum and insisted on having a steaming bowl of punch. How much Dr Fernandez wished that he could have had possession of the laudanum then to add an extra flavour to that potent punch bowl; however, as it stood, it was not a bad friend to him that punch, for it is potent and insidious when properly brewed, as Father Abraham could brew it.

As the captain made it, it was a glorious compound—a bottle of rum, a bottle of brandy, a bottle of the finest champagne, two glasses of curaçoa, a pint of sherry, with sugar, lemon and nutmeg, and not too much hot water. It tasted delicious and mild, yet the doctor warned Dennis and the ladies in Italian to *feign* the drinking of that delectable and innocent-looking compound.

He had tested the effects of curaçoa and champagne combined, with the other friendly spirits added. Lauda-

num seemed to be a weak superfluity. The game would be in his own hands if Dennis could keep from that fatal draught.

Yet it required the deadliest sign of the order to stop that worthy as he snuffed in the rare perfume and raised the glass to his lips. As it happened, his eyes caught those of his superior at the right moment, and, with a heavy sigh, he emptied his glass secretly at his side, and waited with cheeks a shade paler. To have disobeyed that sign meant death.

But the captain, who was free from duty that night, and the second mate quaffed deeply, while the ladies sipped like artful canaries. The doctor didn't fear much from them. They were fairly seasoned casks; besides, they did not require to be too sober on this night, for the first mate and the third were to be the favoured swains, and they must be made amorous and docile.

"*Qui va la !*" he said quietly to them, and these fair dames understood. It was the word of the sentinel; they were to be on the alert and on guard.

"There is too much for us here in this bowl, captain. Send for the officers on deck to share with us," whispered the princess into the captain's ear.

"I guess they will enjoy a liquor," answered the captain a little thickly, for he had quaffed deeply, "and there won't be much to watch this night, I calculate, with this catspaw of a wind."

"Let us take up the grog for the men on watch," replied both ladies, laughing gaily, and the honest but half-drunk skipper gave his assent.

Then the two fair dames, filling out a large bumper each, left the cabin and went up to the poop, where the mates were promenading. These worthy mariners wel-

comed the sympathetic angels, and, quaffing the bowls, sat down to enjoy an hour of true love in a quiet corner.

The ship was set full sail, with sky-scrapers and out-standing sails. The wind was fitful and light; there was no danger of a squall. All they could expect this night was an odd puff now and again to speed them on their way. The watch was merely a sham, for they might as well have been sleeping.

A sultry tropic night, with a sky thickly studded with glowing stars, and an ocean calm and mysterious. A night for love. The mates fixed upon their tender companions, with heads swimming from the punch, and made them comfortable; then, flinging themselves at their feet, they began to talk nonsense and lose their heads, while the watch drowsily lay about the hot decks and loafed.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MORNING COFFEE.

CAPTAIN ABRAHAM WHEELER and his mate had both good heads for carrying liquor, therefore what might have knocked down ordinary men merely made them slightly muddled and sleepy, with the desire to turn in a little sooner than usual.

The doctor and Dennis, feigning to share the festive bowl, lured them to empty it, and when that was done were not a little surprised, as well as disappointed, to observe how steadily both these hardy mariners were able to walk when they rose from the table and proposed a promenade on deck before retiring. They agreed, however, eagerly, for the little cabin was stuffy and close, and they wanted to see the effect of the fresh night air on that punch.

The officers on the watch, from their dark corners, saw the skipper and his friends emerge from the companion and were instantly upon their feet. Leaving their innamoratas still sitting waiting on their return, they came forward and saluted the old man and made their report of the ship's progress. She was now going by

fits and starts at the rate of five knots an hour, while the breeze was gradually growing more steady although still falling away at times, but it was coming from the right quarter—the south—and would soon waft them into the regular Atlantic trades.

Four bells had just struck, and the watch had altered the yards by a point so as to capture what wind there was, and they were now once more taking their ease on the main-deck, masticating their quids of tobacco and telling yarns, or listening to the plantation airs which the 'prentice boy was playing on a concertina, an instrument which, if acceptable at any time, is acceptable on the ocean and in the tropics.

A still and warm yet grateful night, tempting one to lie on the sun-heated boards on which the pitch from the seams still felt sticky and soft. The dew was falling heavily and saturating the canvas and ropes, the stars were moist-looking and dazzling overhead, while round the hull the parted waters burned blue. Just such a night when life at sea is really a pleasure and a reposeful dream.

The wind was very fitful; now it would come along soft yet strong, and bulge out the sails for a few moments, sending the ship along rapidly, then it would fall behind, leaving the sails empty and flapping dolorously against the masts.

"This will go on all night," said the captain, a little thickly, as he passed his hand over his eyes and looked round him, "but I reckon that to-morrow night we shall be able to forge ahead."

"Whereabouts are we now, captain?" inquired the doctor.

"Just outside the River Amazon," replied the captain, and then he added,— "This fresh air on the top of that

grog has made me ready for my bunk, so I guess I'll turn in. Good-night to ye, gentlemen."

"Good-night! we will not be long in following your example," said the doctor, as he watched the burly skipper stagger along the poop and help himself down the companion-ladder with both hands on the rails.

"He must sleep sound and quickly after that, Dennis. Be ready to follow me down presently," whispered the doctor to his fell comrade.

"I am ready," replied Dennis, "but I must have a proper drunk after the job is done to make up for my abstinence to-night. By Jehosophat, but the fumes of that punch bowl were enough to make a Mohammedan forego paradise."

"You may have what you like afterwards," answered the doctor.

They watched the second mate, who was farther gone than the captain, swing about for two or three turns of the poop and then pitch himself heavily on the top of the skylight which was covered with tarpaulin. In another moment he was sound asleep, as they could hear by his nasal accompaniment.

One seaman stood at the wheel, impassive and intent only on his duty, the compass box, over which an oil lamp swung; he was safe there for the next hour.

The two mates, after a few remarks about the weather, had returned to their pleasant occupation with the traitress syrens. They would not interfere or come below until their watch was up, so that the ruffians had two clear hours before them.

"Come," whispered the doctor, and at the word he turned to go down to the cabin with Dennis at his heels.

They passed the open doors of the berths which

they and the mates occupied, and then through the small saloon—a cosy enough cabin, with swinging oil lamp, cushioned lockers at the sides, one centre table, and at the end a couple of panel mirrors at the side of the stove.

Outside the cabin a small passage led to the main deck, the outer doors of which were closed. On one side lay the pantry and on the other the captain's cabin, the most commodious room on the ship.

The door was a little ajar, held in its place by a hook, and as it was lighted with an oil lamp they could see the window over which the curtains were carefully drawn, with the white painted chest of drawers and dressing-table. On the top of the drawers were spread out for constant reference the charts and log-book with sextant and other instruments. The medicine chest stood at the side of the washstand, and could also be seen through that narrow slit.

Standing deadly still, and listening intently, they could hear that the captain was already asleep, the heavy and dreamless sleep of the inebriated, for they could hear an occasional snort and snore breaking upon the deep breathing.

"You know what to do, Dennis?"

"Yes; stand over the skipper with my knife at his throat. If he wakes, I'll slit it promptly, never fear," replied Dennis softly.

"Don't do it unless he does wake, though."

"I'll take good care of that."

"Then not a word while we are inside."

With a light hand the doctor unhooked the door, Dennis having already drawn and unclasped his large pocket-knife, and together they slipped noiselessly

inside, fastening the door, as it had been, behind them.

They captain lay on his back, in his under-shirt and drawers only, with his grizzled beard in the air and his windpipe exposed to full view.

He was an orderly man even in his cups, and habit made him easy to wake up when disturbed, but these two assassins were adepts at not disturbing people; they had left their shoes in the cabin, and made no noise as they moved about like phantoms.

A bunch of keys was hanging on the wainscoting over the captain's head, and the clothes he had taken off were neatly folded on the sea-chest at the side of his bunk, an open Bible lay beside them, from which he had read his nightly chapter.

The lips of the atheistic doctor curled as he took in these details. Perhaps the angels were watching over the drunken slumbers of this honest seaman, yet it was doubtful if they would be powerful enough to save that sun-tanned neck from the knife of Dennis, supposing he woke before they were gone.

Dennis took up his post quietly and grimly, his sharp and large clasp knife about the eighth of an inch from the bare throat under him, and his evil eyes fixed on the closed lids of the sleeper, while the doctor lifted the bunch of keys gently from the nail, and, going over to the medicine chest, selected the proper key, which he had observed before, and fitted it in.

The lock did not yield quite noiselessly, and at the rasping sound the captain stirred in his sleep, then the knife went very close to the skin, almost grazing it, as Dennis prepared for action.

Both murderers waited breathlessly while the old

captain flung out his brawny arms and seemed about to wake, then he settled down once again to placid slumber, and the doctor proceeded to work.

He carefully examined the medicine bottles, holding up the labels to the light until he had found what he wanted, then taking out the required quantities, which he carefully weighed in the scales and methodically packed up in separate papers, he replaced the bottles exactly as they were before, relocked the chest and hung up the keys without any jingling, then with a slight touch on the arm of Dennis he stole to the door, unhooked it, and held it open for his companion to pass through, and rehooked it as noiselessly. They had succeeded without having to use the knife.

"I shall put this in the coffee to-morrow morning, therefore advise our lady friends to stick to claret at breakfast. We shall have a ship of corpses to heave overboard to-morrow night; of course, you are certain about your skill in steering the vessel into port?"

"Yes," replied Dennis. "I know where we are now, and can reach the shore without much trouble. We can easily ship a crew from Paramaribo, and sail from there over to Cadiz, where we will be able to do some business."

"Right. Now you can go to sleep, comrade, while I go on deck and relieve the ladies. I shall not turn in to-night, as I must watch my opportunity with the morning coffee. They must have their dose early, if I can possibly manage to divert the cook."

The doctor had not been more than half an hour absent from the deck, for when he once more appeared one of the sailors was striking five bells.

The night was early yet, only half-past ten o'clock, yet

no sooner did the ladies see the doctor as he passed under the bell lantern and hear him humming, in his baritone voice, "The Marseillaise," than they began to consider the advisability of retiring to their mutual cabin, and therefore bidding their amorous swains a whispered and tender good night, they emerged from their sheltered corners, and approached the doctor arm in arm like the loving sisters that they were.

"Drink no coffee to-morrow," murmured the doctor in Italian, as he wished them both a good night.

He resumed his promenade after they had retired, and watched the sea and sky with interest. He was not at all inclined for bed, he told the mates, but would keep them company till their watch was up. So they walked about together, he asking, with all a landsman's curiosity, about the ship, with the latitude and longitude, questions which they cheerfully answered, for a sailor is never chary with his information.

So the next hour and a half passed, and eight bells sounded, when the watch was changed, and the second mate was roused up and took the charge of the ship without disturbing the captain.

Through the night the doctor remained awake, mostly walking slowly to and fro, but sometimes leaning over the taffrail and watching the phosphorescent waters as they scattered their pale flashes against the sides of the hull. He had arranged his different powders together, and was waiting, like the angel of death, on the hour.

Seven bells were struck ; it was now half-past three o'clock ; in another half-hour the watch would again be changed and coffee served out to all hands. The cook made an extra supply at five o'clock for the passengers.

Remarking that he felt chilly to the second mate, he strolled over to the caboose, where the African cook was

dozing before the galley stove, and went inside to warm himself and see how the coffee was getting along.

The cook welcomed him with a friendly grin, and poured out a pannikin of the fragrant decoction; he had only a short time before roasted and ground the beans, so that it was not properly boiled yet, but the doctor said he was grateful for the early cup, and offered to look after the boiler, if Sambo cared to have a nap. He would wake him up in good time.

Sambo wanted a nap badly, for he only got his sleep by odd snatches, so, thanking the doctor for his kindness, he at once rolled himself up like a dog and passed straightway into dreamland.

An instant of time did the accursed deed, only the lifting up of the lid and dropping the powders in. The rest of the half-hour the doctor spent watching, mixing and clearing the decoction. As eight bells once more struck he roused up the negro and went out again on deck.

He was restless, however, and stayed close to the caboose, watching the half-roused men, and those already eager to turn in, cluster together round the doorway and drink their coffee. He saw the second mate take his share with the men, and then, after they were all served, the cook poured out three more pannikins, and placing them with some biscuit on a tray, he marched off to the cabin to wake the captain and first and third mates, for this was his duty each morning.

The doctor followed the negro and saw him open the captain's door, then he heard the usual questions of the captain about the weather as he quaffed off his morning draught thirstily. He saw the mates also come from their cabin with their steaming pannikins in their hands, drinking as they stumbled on with sleep-filled eyes.

"Hallo ! doctor, not in bed yet ?"

"Not yet, my friends, but I think about going now. It is a lovely morning."

"Yes, we'll have a fair run up till noon, I guess," said the first mate.

"And after that ?"

"Oh, a dead calm, till after noon again, but we'll pick up again to-night, and be well over all our troubles by that time."

"I hope so, I am sure," replied the doctor.

"You may bet on it, if you like, doctor."

"No, thank you, it is foolish to bet against a certainty ; and since you say so, then it will be so," said the doctor, with a gentle laugh.

"He is a good coon that foreign doctor, but he has an uncommonly nasty way of grinning," remarked the third mate to the first as they went on deck, emptying the dregs of their pannikins overboard as they passed along.

"Yas, I calculate he has, Shem, but the ladies make up for their men, don't they ?"

"You bet, boss."

"Breakfast is served at nine o'clock," murmured the doctor as he looked after the mates. "That is five hours from now. They will be dead in four hours, so that we shall have to make breakfast for ourselves. I shall have three hours sleep, and then wake up Dennis and the ladies to help with the ship. Yes, I can sleep now."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A GATHERING OF THE GODS.

BEFORE real greatness comes to either man or woman, as a rule, old age has crept upon them, robbing them of their bodily strength and youthful graces, and making them uninteresting in the extreme. Now and again a youth may leap into popularity, but it is rare that nature produces infant phenomena where great thoughts and great conceptions are concerned. Great minds are of turgid growth. We might imagine a youthful Raphael, but it is hard to picture a youthful Rembrandt or Titian.

The guests of Hesperia and Imenus were some of the greatest that the ages of art and letters have ever produced, yet Philip could not get up the awe for them that he might have felt towards greybeards, and none appeared older than twenty-one or twenty-two. Their names, besides, were totally unknown to him, as more than likely will be the names of Shakespeare, Milton, Rembrandt and others of their kindred twenty thousand years after this. Most of the celebrities present had flourished cycles of centuries before his time on the plane of mortality.

Yet it was a brilliant company which had assembled

for the sake of their hosts to welcome this new couple and do honour to them. Philip and Adela felt this and their own insignificance before they were very long amongst these youthful-looking sages, philosophers, poets, painters, musicians and sculptors. It was a gathering of the gods and goddesses, and the newcomers were contented to sit and listen, or look round them and admire.

"This is just a little too fine for me," whispered Captain Nelson in Philip's ear. "I'm going back to England, if they will show me the route to-morrow ; I want to see how my poor wife is getting along."

"Perhaps it would be wiser to leave such earthly affairs alone, my friend," answered Hesperia quietly. "Still, if you desire it, to-morrow you can be in England, even now, if you wish to leave us."

"No, my dear friend, to-morrow will suit me perfectly," answered the gallant captain hastily, and with crimson cheeks.

"It is better, as a rule, not to return to earth too quickly ; not before we have acquired the philosophy to view calmly and dispassionately the frailties, meanesses, and other imperfections of the flesh. While in the body, you could only see what was set before you to look at, and that was best for your earthly happiness ; but now all thoughts, as well as all actions, by day or night, are revealed to you, as your thoughts are to us."

"Still, I wish to see my wife and my home," said the captain stoutly.

"So you shall," answered Hesperia ; "for to-night, stay with us, and to-morrow we will speed you on your way."

"You have no desire to go back to the present world, have you ?" asked the hostess, turning to the newly-wedded pair.

"None," replied both Philip and Adela.

"I have thought upon a tour which might interest you both for a time, after you have seen all that we can show you here. There is Ancient Egypt and Assyria, with Greece, Rome, and other historical scenes that you might like to see in their former reality, also some of the great men and women whom you have read about. You can visit them in their different homes, and talk with them when you please. Most of these latter-day geniuses spend much of their time as they used to spend it, yet I must warn you not to build up too high ideals about them before you see them, or you will be disappointed, for they all eat and drank, lived, slept and moved about much the same as ordinary mortals do to-day, and have done since the world began. To be a great philosopher, writer or painter, does not make much difference in the man's outward appearance or behaviour. He may pose a little more if he is a fool, yet, as a rule, his gifts keep him from being a fool, but he has all the weaknesses, apart from his genius, that other people have, and it takes a great number of centuries to wipe out the affectations and habits of a spirit."

"We will try not to build upon the great men of the past, and take them as they are for the sake of what they have left us. Your programme is delightful."

The dining hall where they were assembled was of too vast an extent for any other than an Oriental climate. In the frigid zones the ideal of a comfortable dining saloon is limited space, limited company, and drawn blinds. In the tropics space is required, marble walls and floors, fountains playing, perfume, and a vast concourse to dine along with.

In this hall they had space and company sufficient to

fulfil the conditions required. Over three hundred guests were seated, or rather reclining, on couches, while those who had been elected to wait for the night attended dutifully upon the guests.

Hesperia explained to her new guests that this was no servitude, for that she, with her husband and the guests there assembled, would take their turn of waiting at other feasts.

“We are no slaves, and have no slaves; those who wait upon us to-night occupy the same positions as we do. It is our pride to be ministers and servants to each other. We cannot lie here and wait upon ourselves, therefore we take our turn to be waited upon and to be waiters. The cook who superintends this feast is the greatest that ever existed. It is his glory to concoct from simple rudiments dishes that formerly he created on earth from fowl, fish and flesh; and although my husband was once a mighty painter, he cannot think himself greater than the genius who gives to us this delight.

What a dream of gastronomy that repast was, Philip thought, as he partook of dish after dish, and he was no mean judge of the pleasures of eating. He had arrived at the age when men pay attention to these details, when to a pious gastronomer heaven would be a dreary desert without dinner.

“Do you think that a taste or a pleasure which does no wrong can be a sin?” said Hesperia. “The saints of the Roman Church and the other earth faiths advocate the torturing of the flesh, yet how grievously are they wronging the Maker of all these things when they do so. He gives us our instinct, which may be cultivated into a high art. It may be painting, poetry, sculpture, music or eating. He has provided these

instincts with the material to gratify them, and should we not be base criminals and ingrates if we did not enjoy the pleasures which He has provided?

“He gives us the instinct of love. You have now proved how completely He caters for that instinct. On earth you may have made a mistake, and grasped the shadow for the substance—that was the error of your ignorance—yet you had your share of pleasure also. On earth you eat often what did not suit you—made friends of the wrong people—loved the wrong person; yet the food was luscious while it lasted, the friendship was a pleasure until you discovered its fallacy, the love engrossing for a time, therefore you had all the joys you were fitted for with your blinded senses.

“You see now, and therefore you can appreciate, so you have the keener and more lasting pleasure, and that is the heaven of all religions—to be supremely happy.

“You can enjoy this feast without reflection or remorse. It is drawn from the atoms of earth, yet no creature suffered to administer it to us, therefore it is free from sin. No after effects can trouble you, for as it is taken it is disintegrated. The wines have been drawn from the casks of centuries, mellowed by time, buried in the earth’s womb. No epicure on earth’s surface ever tasted such nectar, and yet we have an unlimited supply.

“Will the Christians who flagellate themselves and preach misery never understand the words of their own chosen Master? He came eating and drinking; even on the cross He said to the penitent thief, ‘To-night shalt thou sup with Me in paradise.’ Do you think that He would invite a guest to sup without having supper for His guest?”

The argument appeared plain to Philip and Adela,

but more than the argument were the evidences of the rare viands before them.

The hall was a lofty and wide one, with everything that the imagination of man could think of to adorn a feast—flowers spread over the board, while course after course came on, so delicate, so refined, so all-sufficing, that they could not pause to consider what the ingredients of each dish were, simply that the feast was perfect and the wines without a flaw.

They had music also while they feasted, delicious strains of melody that wafted their spirits to a paradise of dreams.

At last it was over, and the guests, after wishing the happy pair all the joys which perfect love alone can impart, left them to themselves, the best boon to all true lovers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEAD CALM.

THE dastard crime was consummated which, had they committed no other in their evil lives, must have rendered them accursed and outlawed from every consideration human and natural. They had crept in the most deadly and infamous fashion that black murder can creep, and done their benefactors to death at one fell stroke.

Dr Fernandez slept calmly while his deadly dose seized upon the vitals of those brave and generous men who dropped down one after the other, and expired amidst terrible pangs of agony. The man at the wheel fell against the spokes, and clutching them in his last throes, still held on to them with death's vice-like grip; the captain before his charts; the officers on their side of the poop; the watch above, as they were cleaning down the decks; and the watch below, with their rumpled bedclothes between their clenched teeth, now lay doubled and livid in their bunks; the black cook in his galley, and the handsome young apprentice boy, who had played the con-

certaina the night before. Not a man or boy who had taken the coffee had escaped the deadly fate prepared for them by this remorseless and cold-blooded monster.

"Get up, Dennis, for the ship is ours, and we must not lose any time in working her. Call the two women, for they must help also."

It was nine o'clock, and the doctor had been for a walk round. He was a little more ghastly than usual, for even an Anarchist can hardly face such treacherous and ice-cold murder without blanching a little. He was in a brutal mood, for he had quaffed off a tumbler of brandy as if it had been water as he passed the pantry, where the spirits were kept, and felt impatient at the slowness of his comrade in dressing.

"Hurry up, damn it, man, or the devil only knows where the ship may get to while you moon there. Get up to the wheel without more delay than you can help, and I will rouse the women myself."

He strode out of the cabin which he and Dennis shared, and, dashing open the door of the one occupied by the two guilty traitoresses, seized them rudely by their naked arms and shook them roughly.

"Get up—get up—you are wanted on deck!" he shouted in their startled ears, as they both sprang up and looked at his bloodshot eyes in amazement and considerable terror.

"What is it, doctor?"

"The ship is ours, and the men who were embracing those pretty carcasses are now dead meat. Come and help to clear the deck," he cried savagely and sardonically, as he left them shuddering at the coarseness of his words; he had forgotten his usual veneer of politeness on this morning.

When he reached the poop he saw Dennis in his shirt

and trousers, with bare feet, trying to unclasp the dead man's hands from the wheel. It took them both some minutes to do this, during the process of which Dennis had to use his clasp knife and hack off the fingers at the middle joints ; then they managed to tear the corpse away and pitch it behind them over the stern, after which Dennis took possession of the wheel and examined the compass.

"She has not fallen off much, doctor, but we shall have to alter her course before long and get in some of those sails. You have made a clean sweep as usual, I see."

He was looking along the decks as he spoke, a growing horror in his eyes at the ghastly sights before him, and a secret fear for this remarkably clever man, who, with his damnable skill, could sweep off humanity in such a wholesale fashion.

The doctor did not answer ; he was looking over the ocean with a sombre glare, and biting his nails abstractedly.

"I expect I shall have to take in those sheets myself," continued Dennis, "and that will be slow and heavy work ; fortunately the wind is light as yet, and will fall off about noon. You will be able to manage the wheel while I do this, for we must be prepared for any kind of weather in these seas."

"Yes," replied the doctor, "I can manage the wheel, or we can lash it up and I can help with the ropes."

"These corpses must be got out of the way first, for they won't last long this weather."

"No, not with what they have taken ; they will decompose more rapidly than ordinary dead men."

They were a gloomy as well as a short-handed and insufficient crew on board the *George Washington* on

that day, after they had removed the gruesome evidences of their crime, and a deadly stillness and foreboding of evil settled upon them with the calm, such as they had not felt on board the *Rockhampton* when similarly occupied, nor on the island. These last murders seemed to weigh upon even their hardened minds with a peculiarly heavy and chilly horror, so that they shivered and felt cold, even amidst that tropical sun-glare. Possibly the doctor was no worse a demon than he had been before, yet now his last crime assumed colossal proportions, which filled the two women, and even Dennis, with fear.

They smiled upon him faintly and flattered him hypocritically, yet they avoided his eyes and went about their work with feverish energy, as if to banish thought. The doctor also wore a gloomy brow, although he did not express his dissatisfaction.

"I wish we had Anatole and Eugene with us," said the baroness, as both women stood beside the gigantic Dennis during one of their rests, while the doctor paced gloomily to and fro.

"So do I," answered Dennis, "for single-handed I don't know how I am to get these sails reefed before night, but with Anatole I would feel more at ease. God help us, if one of those tropic squalls comes along."

"A pity you did not think of that before," said the women, who, although they had acted their parts as decoys, were ready to make reflections after the deed was accomplished.

The mid-day sun shone upon them with terrific force, and blistered the bare feet of Dennis as he vainly tried to find a shadow on the hot planks, while aloft the painted and varnished yards felt as if they were boiling. The sails also gave out an intolerable dry heat as he

drew them up by painful efforts, expending all his vast strength and sapping the vitality out of him.

Not a cloud broke the monotony of that blue sky, which appeared to be doubled and deepened in the heaving ocean, along which rolled slow swells that lifted the baking hull up and down or from side to side with a weary and sickening motion. Not a breath of air came to cool this rarefied atmosphere amid which they all gasped.

They had taken a little claret and the uncooled water with a few biscuits, for none could eat much in this burning stagnation, therefore they felt faint as well as dejected.

So the afternoon wore away slowly, and the sun went over the oily sea like a blood-coloured ball, but the expected wind did not come; indeed, when night fell and the new moon hung for a while like a golden sickle and then also disappeared, leaving the stars glowing fiercely above that green space, the sultry heat still continued, lapping them in wearied lassitude.

They filled and lighted the lamps early, and went together from one part of the ship to the other, feeling as if it was a haunted vessel. While the women went to the caboose to cook supper, Dennis, and even the doctor, hung about the doorway and watched them silently. The wheel was firmly lashed up, and did not require looking after with this calm. None of them cared to be left alone in the dark, but glanced often over their shoulders as if expecting to see something.

By and by, when supper was ready, they all helped to carry the dishes to the lighted cabin, keeping close together while they did so. A hasty supper it was of tinned soup, followed by salted beef and potatoes,

with biscuit and cheese, washed down with claret and water.

There were plenty of other provisions on board, but no one cared to go in search of them, not on this day at anyrate, and the cooks were not at all inspired. They sat down as near to each other as possible, and forced themselves to eat the food, but the meal was not enlivened by any conversation ; indeed, the captain's and mates' places, which they avoided, seemed as if occupied by unseen watchers, who looked with stern and reproachful eyes upon them while they eat.

The doctor, however, at the close of this silent repast, went into the pantry, and returned with two bottles of brandy, which he opened and placed before them without a word. All helped themselves from these bottles, pouring out the contents into tumblers instead of glasses and emptying them quickly. Then they lit the captain's cigars, the women as well as the men, as there were no cigarettes, and proceeded to the poop to smoke them.

As they emerged from the companionway, Dennis, who was first, started violently, fell back a step with a cry of horror, then, recovering himself quickly, he laughed feebly as he exclaimed,—

“Cuss me if I didn't fancy I saw the fellow whose fingers I cut off still hanging on to the wheel.”

“Don't, Dennis,” cried both women, with violent shivers, for instinctively they had both glanced towards that part of the bulwarks where they had sat the night before with the first and third mates, and they also seemed to see the poor, foolish fellows waiting for them there.

It was a dreadful experience during the dark watches of that night to these criminals, unbelieving and hardened although they were, for not one of them

would own to the superstitious terrors which had hold of them, and yet all felt the eerie sensation and horrifying delusions, the actual perpetrator perhaps least of all; yet even he had a strange foreboding and almost regret upon him, and he had to admit to himself that it was an unholy act which even the Red Cause could hardly justify.

With a fair breeze these morbid feelings might not have been experienced, for distance, like time, blunts terror; but here they were stationary, almost on the spot where their victims had been cast into the sea, and they could not get away from the vicinity.

They lay on deck all through the night, trying to fix their eyes on the stars, and keep from looking round them at the shadows of the decks, sleeping only by short snatches, to start up with fear and trembling—that is, the two women felt all this horror. The doctor lay brooding and planning what he would do when once more on dry land. Like Napoleon, his star did not shine brightly at sea, and he hated it during this forced inactivity. If he saw the ghosts as the others did, he put it down to scientific reasons, and refused to believe in the psychological, yet for all that he hovered near his companions.

Dennis was brooding also, and not happily. He could navigate a ship fairly well, as far as steering her went and setting sails, but this was his first experience as responsible commander, and he felt frightened in case he might make the same deplorable mistake as poor Anatole had done. His former experience also told him that these were treacherous waters they were amongst, and that if a cyclone did come, or even a very ordinary squall, that they would all be in very great danger, with those unmanageable sails spread out.

He would liked to have reefed her entirely, but such a move was impossible as they wanted to get on. He had bared her as closely as he dared do already, so that they would not go fast even if the fair breeze did come, but in a storm they carried by far too much.

Dennis MacBride had his own kind of courage. He had been composed and cool enough when standing over the sleeping captain, with his knife ready for emergencies. He would have taken up his post in the gallery of a theatre or church with his explosive bomb in his hand, and risked his life with the others who were round him, and, by reason of his great strength and savage blood, rather courted a street row, and gloried in a fight.

But he was not a daring seaman, and would as likely as not lose his presence of mind if called to face a sudden conflict with the elements, while this cold poisoning appalled him not a little, although, like the women, he had aided in the preliminaries.

He had left these men robust and healthy, and, being of their own craft, with a certain feeling of comradeship, he had found them blue, livid and contorted corpses. If he had been awake and seen their death struggles he might have become used to the alteration, but, as it chanced, it was all too sudden and silent a change for even his iron nerves. The throwing of a bomb and the scattering of limbs fired his blood, for it looked like war. The stabbing of a traitor also was legitimate enough, for it was vengeance ; but what class could this atrocity come under ? He had not objected to it before it was done, but now that he had seen it, it frightened him, as did the doctor.

A large shower of falling meteors roused him from one of his short snatches of sleep, and for a long

moment illumined the whole ocean, sky and ship. While this preternatural glare lasted, he seemed to see the bodies of the murdered men clinging to the taffrail and watching with livid faces and staring eyes their murderers, and these apparitions made him morbid and low-spirited, for it seemed the sign of coming disaster.

Another day and night came without bringing the slightest puff of wind to them, while the sails hung limply against the masts.

The third day was the same, only closer and more depressing than before. The sun burned like a yellow flame above them, while the horizon was completely lost in the heat-haze, the sun going down redder and more angry-looking than ever.

Would it never come, that eagerly-desired gentle breeze? Were they doomed for their hellish ingratitude to lie there on that oily-looking ocean for ever, and rot like those dead men so close to them?

They all hung over the taffrail and watched that lurid sun set with the horror growing greater in their hearts, the sense of impending disaster heavy upon them. They could hardly breathe, for the space around them felt like a heated vacuum, while that crimson sun glared out from the now empurpled haze and spread a broad strip, like a river of gore along the ocean, from the sky to their blistered hull.

Suddenly the princess screamed shrilly, and pointed with one lean finger to the blood-red trail of lustre, while she covered her eyes with her other hand:—

“See!—oh, see!—the dead men!”

CHAPTER XXV

THE TEMPEST.

"DON'T be a fool, Katrina," shouted the doctor furiously, as he rushed at her, seized her arm and shook her violently. "It is nothing, I tell you."

But the woman chattered with her teeth, as he shook her, in almost imbecile terror, while she still cried brokenly,—

"Look!—look for yourself! They are coming, swathed in blood, to avenge themselves upon us."

They were all looking at the approaching train of horrors now, with the exception of the princess, who had fallen upon the deck in a fit, the pinky froth gathering upon her blue lips, which she gnawed with her strong white teeth as she lay writhing and unheeded by the others.

Upon the trail of light a number of objects floated, with distended and bulging bodies; they were too far off yet to distinguish for certainty what they were, yet the guilty minds of those watchers supplied the information.

"Dolphins at play," cried the doctor hoarsely; "that is all."

They seemed to be dancing as merrily upon that red track as if they were dolphins gambolling and coming nearer as the sun went lower down and the lustre grew fainter; it was only a half disc now which hovered amongst the fumes above the ocean.

"That's no dolphins' fins, but the decomposed carcasses of dead men, swollen up to three times their bulk, and light as balloons with the gases inside," cried the stolid Dennis. "By God! there is the captain with his grey hair and beard, with the first mate alongside of him, in front of the others."

"Oh, horrible—horrible!" cried the baroness, sinking down beside her friend and covering her eyes.

"What is there horrible about the sight of a few dead bodies floating on the water?" snarled the doctor viciously, as he kept his red glare upon those swollen figures. "You have looked on many a dead man since you saw your father guillotined."

He seemed to be driven mad with rage, however, for the froth gathered also about his lips as he peered over the ship's side and looked upon his victims.

All at once Dennis sprang up with a fearful oath.

"Cuss me, what am I thinking of, to stand here watching these dummies, when we should be working. Do you not see the furrow in their wake urging them onward. There's a squall coming, with eagle speed, too, this way."

He sprang as he spoke to the wheel and, slashing at the rope which held it in its place, released it, then taking the spokes in his strong grasp he gave

a turn to the helm and sent the vessel a point round.

"Rouse up these women, doctor," he shouted from his post; yet even as he did so the rest of his warning or order was lost in the wind-howl that burst upon them like the shriek of an enraged tigress, and in another instant they were buried under the white foam and spray of that swiftly-rushing wave.

"There goes the mizzen-mast," groaned Dennis, as he held on to the wheel with a giant's strength, straining his muscles as he turned it round against the rush, and shaking his head to get rid of the salt water that was now rolling from him. "I thought it must go if we had a sudden squall like this."

The descending sun gave one last wave of red light before she sank under the waves, and lighted up that confusion of cordage, sails, masts and yards, as they broke away and with a thunderous crash sank over the side.

"They ought to be hacked away, but who's to do it?" again asked Dennis helplessly, as he stuck to the wheel. "Where are they now, the doctor and the women?"

He peered through the gathering darkness for his companions, even while he did his best to steer. The waters about the ship were a furious mass of white and whirling curd, amongst which the vessel was labouring heavily, hampered with all that clinging mass of wreckage. He could not see his friends; they had been washed off the poop, either overboard or on to the main deck, and he could not leave his post to ascertain; the ship and his friends must now take their chance.

It was a hurricane without a cloud to denote its

coming. The darkness swooped down swiftly and the stars shone with quivering radiance, yet still that tempest increased with resistless fury, and the boiling waves broke over the stern and swamped the decks, while Dennis hung on to his wheel.

Could he have cleared that mizzen-mast all might have gone well with them, for she was a staunch, well tried craft; but no ship, however strongly built by man, could endure for long the tugging, straining and ram-like butting of that mizzen wreckage dragging her back, driving great holes in her planks, with those mountains of fluid pouring over her.

Dennis felt it was a hopeless case after the first stroke; he could only wait and see the end.

About ten o'clock, as nearly as he could judge of the flight of time, the second mast went, and helped onward the work of destruction; they were driving on with all that mass of wreckage hampering them, but the waves were driving faster. He could do no more good with the wheel now for that dismantled hulk, he must look out for himself and try, if possible, to lighten her, so that she might float till daylight.

Leaving the wheel to chance, all drenched as he was and choking with each fresh wave that rushed over him, he made his way from the poop to the main-deck, and, crawling over the wreckage, he reached the carpenter's room, where, after a weary search in the dark, he found at last an axe. Feeling the edge, and finding it sharp, he returned and began his heavy and uncertain task.

He had no dread of ghosts or dead men now in his work, although the night was dark and the overflow

blinding. No man of robust nature could feel alone amongst these raging elements that brought out his fighting qualities. He was battling for life now with a robust enemy that did not give his muscles time to relax, or his mind leisure to reflect, therefore he was once more the savage and wild boar Dennis.

He did Trojan work that night in the dark, hacking at the ropes and cordage in his way. He had no fear of falling beams or spars from above, for they were all overboard, and a grim joy possessed him as he cut strand after strand, while he went along first the one side and then the other feeling the hull lighten as the wreckage tore away.

He was bleeding and bruised by many a rebounding rope that whipped him across the face or chest as he released them so suddenly and sent them flying over the seething waters, but he did not feel this at the time, any more than a fighter feels the strokes when his blood is up. He was a powerful and brutal man fighting against Fate, and so far he conquered.

He felt that the hulk was at liberty with his last cut, for she raised herself out of the waves, held yet on her course by the flying canvas at her bows; these, like flags, streamed in front, yet helped to give her speed.

Then he went back to the wheel and remained there, sturdily turning the helm as best he could to avoid the heaviest onslaught from behind.

Slowly the hours of darkness passed, and still the vessel floated and drove on, although Dennis could feel that her hours were numbered, for she began to labour once more, and from her sludging motions he knew that her holds were filling up.

At last the welcome dawn broke, and the storm was almost past, but the *George Washington* was sinking

slowly but surely—already the waves were nearly level with her main deck.

At this moment he felt lonely and wanted the company of his comrades. He could see by the rapidly gathering light that the captain's gig still hung by its davits, and that would do for him and his comrades if he could find them, therefore he began his search.

Seizing his axe in his hand, he left the now useless wheel for the last time and went down to the main-deck and looked about him anxiously.

Objects could be seen fairly distinctly, and every moment they were growing plainer as the light rapidly strengthened. There was only a mild breeze blowing now, and the waves were rolling along merrily, while the hulk was almost still with her weight of water—another warm day was coming on and a placid sea.

Against the bulwarks he saw the princess jammed between it and a heavy water-cask that had broken loose from its lashings and rolled upon her. She was dead enough he could see. No man, far less a frail woman, could have lived with that weight crushing upon them, therefore he passed by her body with one look at her bruised face and flaxen tresses which floated loosely over the wet deck. She was a crafty Russian and a wanton, yet she had been good and tender with him on the island; but she was dead now, therefore beyond a man's regard, at least such a man as he was.

His next discovery was the doctor lying near the empty hen-coop, to which he was still clutching with tenacious fingers. Dennis placed his hand over the prostrate man's heart, and rejoiced to find that it still pulsated; he rejoiced at this for he no longer felt alone.

As he rose and looked round, daylight now fell upon

him with the sun rising from the east, he made another discovery which made his heart for a moment stand still. Two putrid and bulging corpses lay near the aft mast-stump, the captain and the first mate, and between them the form of the baroness.

It took a full minute before Dennis could summon up courage enough to approach these evil-smelling corpses and lift the baroness up from between them; but at last he did so with bated breath and closed eyes, rejoiced to find her still warm.

Laying her down beside the captain, he rushed aft to the pantry and returned with a brandy bottle which, after opening and swigging a good mouthful himself, he poured into their parted lips.

The woman returned to consciousness first, and as she sat up and looked about her dazed, Dennis attended to the doctor, who soon came to his senses.

"We must leave this ship at once or we shall be sucked down with her, for she is rapidly settling. Rouse up, doctor. Rouse up, Delphine, and bear a hand."

Dennis spoke roughly, and it had the proper effect, for both quickly rose to their feet.

"What are we to do?"

"We must first get some provisions and load the gig, and then get off as soon as we can. Let us see what we can secure in the cabin."

He hurried them past those accusing corpses and into the pantry and cabin where, walking with their feet in water, they secured what they could carry and made for the gig.

Not a moment too quickly, as Dennis knew from the ominous steadiness of the decks she was preparing for her final plunge.

To get into the gig and lower her, then cut her

moorings and push off with the oars was the work of a very few minutes. Then Dennis took the oars and bent to them with all his strength while the doctor and the baroness sat overwhelmed and dazed with their misery.

As Dennis pulled away he looked at the fated craft as she slowly settled down to her last repose. The sea was now quiet enough and the sky above pearly and pure. They had not much provisions, but that did not occupy his mind now ; he only thought to get as far away as possible from that doomed vessel, and therefore pulled lustily.

The *George Washington* was settling down steadily, for her holds were now filled with water, and her rails were nearly level with the sea. A few moments she seemed to pause, as if considering how best to make her exit, and then, with a report like a cannon, her decks burst open with the imprisoned air, while objects flew up into the clear space.

The end came almost at once. With a sudden bound she seemed to lift herself clear up out of the water, and next, like a graceful duck diving, she plunged, bow first, down out of sight, leaving a wild whirlpool behind her.

"There goes the last of that craft," said Dennis sentimentally, resting on his oars. "It seems, doctor, as if the Cause isn't fated to keep a ship of their own unless they purchase her in a legitimate fashion."

The doctor bit his lips but said nothing, while Dennis continued,—

"First the *Rockhampton* went to smash, and next the *George Washington*. If we get out of this present scrape, I vote that we keep good faith with our rescuers until we reach dry land. Anarchy isn't a paying game on the high seas."

As he spoke several articles floated up, and, amongst others, the two corpses of the captain and mate. They came up close to them with a rebound which threw them more than half out of the water, so that they could be plainly seen by those in the boat.

"Cuss me, if we are not going to be haunted by these murdered coons," cried Dennis in a tone of profound disgust, as he once more bent to his oars and pulled lustily away from the gruesome spectres

CHAPTER XXVI.

HESPERIA DISCOURSES.

DAYS glided insensibly into weeks amidst the ever-varied delights of this City of Peace—this submerged, wave-covered Atalantis, within which there was no limit to the power of the inhabitants to reproduce whatever they liked for their own edification and enjoyment. Joshua commanding the sun and moon to stand still while he overcame his enemies seemed now a mild feat of will power, when compared to these Atalantians bringing down the doubles of the sun, moon and other constellations to their submarine paradise.

Philip and Adela were left as much to cultivate each other as they cared to, for every spirit was free to come and go and act as they pleased. A set of chambers were placed at their disposal in this many-roomed palace, where they could retire or come forth as they pleased. Yet, as their perfect felicity caused them to be socially disposed, Hesperia still acted as their guide and instructress.

Captain Nelson had departed on his earth quest

accompanied by several of the youths, whose present duty was to help him and educate him in his spiritual powers. He promised to meet his friends again after he had satisfied his curiosity concerning his earthly partner.

“He will find her well, doubtless, and all unconscious of his presence and change of destiny, and that will be his first disappointment and grief—to look at her and hear her speaking, yet to be unable to make his presence known. By and by, when the loss of the ship is reported, he will be grieved when he cannot comfort her, if she really mourns for him, or if she only feigns to do so, it will be worse for him to bear for a time; but he will get over all his grief and mortification, and be able to regard the inevitable with serenity, for this is a portion of his new training. He will learn to use his locomotive powers sooner than he will acquire the philosophy strictly necessary for earth super-vision.”

It was Hesperia who spoke, as she so often did on all subjects, to these devoted spirit-fledglings, and they listened to her respectfully, for she was an experienced and wise woman, who had watched the fevers and frailties of humanity age after age, and race after race, as each individual, filled with the consciousness of being, wriggled, like the newly egg-hatched snake, thinking that all creation must be concerned about its agile motions. She had watched, like the moon, the same scenes of pathos and passion, the same tricks of selfishness and treason, the devotion and faith outraged with the oppressions and wrongs, the suffering and sorrow, which humanity must experience, and which goes on with the sameness and regularity of school routine. Man, the libertine, sowing his wild oats with laughter,

and reaping them afterwards with tears and groans. She had seen the prince become the beggar and outcast, proud and icy virtue grovel in the meshes of passionate and debased vice. Thus they came and went, and came again to fill their different classes, and learn the lessons of immortality, until they grew to be all-wise and all-pitiful as she was now.

Philip spoke to her about the vision which he had seen on the dais on the night of his eternal marriage, and she replied,—

“ You are Christians ; therefore the Founder of your creed came to give you His benediction, as you are under His generalship. Listen to me, my friends. We are all sons and daughters of God, yet some, in the course of ages, reach to the perfection of wisdom and purity, and become virgin mothers and Christs, and these are our teachers and guides, as I have been chosen to be yours for a time. The perfect soul is dual, as I have said before, and may become creative through cycles of progression and knowledge. Thus a virgin conceives and a Christ is born, sinless and complete, yet before this can be, that mother and that child must have passed through all phases and earth experiences. They have been kings and outcasts, pure and degraded by stages, and lifting themselves up, as the flower does from the soil, they have reached planes and distances of purity and wisdom far beyond our present knowing.

“ The Infinite Source is encircled by those mothers and sons, and communicates through them to those not yet advanced to that stage of knowledge, and they are our teachers, as we are yours—masters who come down to us on such occasions as they are required, and give to us the needed instruction ; yet we are at liberty, as

mortals are, to advance as we like, for eternity has no need to hasten on a pupil ; it is only the serf of Time who thinks he must hurry.

“There is not a creed on earth which has not done its share in the universal scheme of progression, although the bigotry of its priests, and the ignorant blindness of its devotees may have clouded the meanings and disgusted advanced minds ; and there is more significance in ceremonials and incantations than the sceptic thinks.

“There are saints, as the Roman calendar decrees, and the Lord of the Christian comes down to earth as the spirit of Samuel came to Saul when he was called by incantation and burnt offerings. He came to bless and to inspire mercy and love. If the recipients are too blinded to receive the gifts he brings in their fulness, yet they get the benefit of a portion.

“The Christian’s, perhaps, has been the most insolent and intolerant of all earth’s creeds, partly because his creed is the most human and selfish. He teaches rewards and punishments, and this is why he can be so remorseless, cruel and inconsistent, yet his very cruelty is the cruelty of the father who punishes his offspring so that they may gain in the end ; therefore it is condoned, for the Master has been misunderstood in His teaching. Yet they only desire humanity to share in their rewards and escape the Divine wrath, and they consider it right to torture the flesh for the sake of the soul. That is their blinded ignorance and mean conception of the Great Source of Nature, which is all progression and beyond revenge.

“There are human beings who have sacrificed their lives for such a misconception of the divine source, that only their own sublime self-sacrifice and

devotion could have saved them from the fate of the beasts who cannot reason. The predestinarians, who look round them with blinded senses, see the spring flowers and leaves bud out, and the winter cause a seeming death, and forget that spring will come again to man as to vegetation. These regard their God as a destroying monster. It takes ages to clear the eyes of a predestinarian, yet even he at last learns to see, and eternity can wait for a thousand years as easily as for an hour. Some are dull children, and some quick, while those who come, as you do, most free from prejudice, get over their trouble the quicker.

“You can traverse space as quickly and as easily as I can, if you like, but it will take you some time and many efforts before this truth comes home to you.

“There are fairies and gnomes, as the poets have taught you, as there are insects and monsters of all sizes in this world of ours. As man has a spirit, so have the animals who breathe around him, and things that have once lived cannot perish. What the mind creates exists as tangibly and real as what the body makes, for it is in the mind more than in the body that man exercises his godhood.

“Olympia exists with the immortal Court of Jove, and in those glades, where the Greek spirits wander, are to be met the Dryades, Fauns, Napeæ, Satyrs and Naiads, as the fairies sport about the moonlit dells. They are the creations of men, therefore remain as he has left them, yet they exist in reality, although soulless and unprogressive.

“Crimes and evil desires uncommitted, yet conceived in the brain of man, also take shape and live as do his

noble or fantastic conceptions. They are the devils who haunt the earth and cloud the brains of those still in the flesh. These are the devils who enter in by legions and take possession of the empty minds of those who do not create for themselves. You can see them in all their uncouth and horrible yet filmy shapes, some like grovelling swine, some like rapacious beasts and birds, with their bat-wings and combination of bestial forms covering the surface of the earth like a dense smoke all intertwined and loathsome to behold, as you can see the creation of purity, self-sacrifice and noble purpose fluttering like white doves and sea-birds in and out that black turgid cloud. These evil conceptions of past races covering the earth are the cause of man's blindness and inability to see beyond material objects, yet by prayer he can drive them back from him and force rends through that living veil, so that the doves may reach him, then for a moment he gets a glimpse of the Beyond before the moving mass of loathsomeness closes in again."

In this fashion Hesperia talked to them and revealed the mysteries of their new life, showing them that the earth was hell, and that man, not God, had created and peopled it, as disease is created from neglect, wilful ignorance and dirt, and which only man himself can abolish by strenuous and constant effort and prayer-sustained will-power.

"We can annihilate our own past creation of evil, and lessen this mighty mass of spectres who swarm together and haunt the earth, and that is our constant duty before we can ourselves rise above them, to pick out our own works and destroy them one by one where they are evil, and leave the good to live. In this way we weed out and keep down the evil swarm, otherwise

the earth would have been submerged and poisoned long ages ago.

“If men and women in the body would but learn to help us, the atmosphere would become clear, as it will be in time. But they send out their murderers, red-handed and full of hatred to swell the ranks of degraded spirits who will not rise or work as we have to do, but instead try to retard us as long as possible, and these are the spirits that men call back with all their vicious desires and gives house-room to. While they have the murderer still in his prison of flesh, he cannot reach them nor influence them so strongly as when they set him at liberty to develop his fell strength. The law of a life for a life and blood for blood is the creed of the savage and the ignorant, and can only add to the rapacious ranks of Murder, for whereas they had him shut out from his fellows before, they open the prison doors and bid him go forth free and unseen to skulk about the earth and take possession of other brains. Have you not observed that after each execution there spreads an epidemic of the same species of crime?

“Blood does not call for blood. The victim, unless vicious himself, has no desire for vengeance on his slayer, for he has no sense of wrong to revenge. He has merely been set at liberty. Sometimes, as in your case, without knowledge of pain, yet, even if with torture, that is forgotten as quickly as the mother forgets the agonies of travail in the joys of this great possession, freedom and real life.

“The murderer, like the robber, seducer and liar, only injures himself by his crimes while in the body, yet sent out with his hatreds and lusts upon him, he becomes like a cageless wild beast, and riots wholesale amongst the

flesh-bound and weak. Therefore, until humanity can reason out this to its logical conclusion, and try other means of cure, the earth must continue to be the only hell of man and fertile breeding-cage of incarnate monsters and devils.

"Your first duty, after you have gained sufficient strength of resistance and knowledge of your own powers, will be to help your murderers in and out of the flesh, restrain them from further evil, and raise them to a knowledge of their own vileness. You must help them to rise out of their hell, and never cease fighting with their inclinations until you have eradicated the disease and washed them clean. Then you will have leisure to look out for your own past conceptions of error and sin, as they must do theirs, and so aid in the great work of clearing the moral atmosphere and preparing the earth for its great future destiny.

"As I have told you, we have working periods and periods of rest here as we had before. You are resting and learning now, and when you are ready for work, you will require no inducement to begin. Meanwhile, rest and be happy."

They were happy in each other, and with such cordial friends, who spared no trouble in their hospitality and the fresh pleasures they provided each hour. Sometimes they sailed out from the city upon that ever-smiling ocean, where the waters gleamed like turquoises, and reflected the exquisitely-carved and painted galleys and dyed sails — a merry company, who sang and laughed in the fulness of their joy.

As they watched the city rising from the sunlit waves, tier above tier, with its gleaming walls, domes, gardens, fountains, many stairs and broad streets, while behind and above swam those hazy mountains, all filmy and

blue in that balmy atmosphere, only to breathe which was an intoxication, they seemed to be looking into heaven—a heaven of perfect beauty, rest and peace.

How joyous that sea was, with those yellow sands fringing the bay, the fairy like grottoes and caves and the wooded cliffs! Here they played like merry children dabbling and bathing in the waters, so cool and delicious in the warm sunbeams.

They soon learned to trust themselves in the air, and what a rare and new sensation it was to float where they liked, to move slowly or dart about like swallows on the wing. They knew now that space was at their command, and that, more swiftly than light can travel, they could transport themselves where they pleased like a flash of thought. The earth, the air and limitless space were at their command, and with the knowledge of this power grew the desire to put it to the test.

Philip was the first to feel this vague desire for action and change, for, man-like, he enjoyed travelling, and Adela quickly received and nurtured the idea.

They would return to those delectable halls, groves, grottoes and gardens when they craved again for rest, but now they both craved for added knowledge.

Hesperia smiled as she read the thought, and gave them full directions how to proceed. They had revelled in the galleries and treasures of art, played in the gardens with the children, and listened to the philosophy and music of Atalantis, and now they desired to finish their honeymoon amongst the other cities and nations of the past before beginning their earth labours.

“Leave little Mary with the other children for the present,” Hesperia said. “She will be better here, and

will bring you back when you have finished your travels and some of your earth work."

So the last day came, and with a happy parting and promise of reunion Adela and Philip sped away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A STRANGE HONEYMOON.

“THERE is one who will meet you at Thebes,” said Hesperia before she parted with them. “Amongst the purest and most man-devoted of the immortals he is not the least. He can tell you much about those cities and nations, for he has studied them profoundly. His name amongst the Romans was Apollonius Tyaneus, of whom I see you have read.”

Philip heard with a thrill of awe the name of this great moral reformer and mystic, who, even in the days of Domitian, had solved the grand problem which has so troubled humanity, and who had conquered death, as his fearless words to the capricious and tyrannical royal madman proved: “Put me to death you cannot, for this the laws of fate will not permit.”

“Who was this great man, Philip?” asked Adela, who had not paid much attention to her classics at school.

“Apollonius Tyaneus, at that period of his existence,

was a native of Tyana, a city of Cappadocia. His birth took place some years before that of our Lord, was foretold long before and accompanied by many prodigies. At the age of fourteen he studied the philosophy of Pythagoras, and at sixteen began his life of self-sacrifice and austerity, abstaining from all animal food, going barefoot and clad only in linen, that he might use nothing proceeding from any living creature.

“Like the Lord Bhudda he relinquished his inheritance to his younger brother and other needy relatives, reserving only sufficient for his own bare necessities, and then commenced his wanderings and teachings. At Pamphylia, Celicia and Aspenda he acted as peacemaker between the infuriated populace and the magistrates. At Antioch and Ephesus, and other cities of Asia Minor, he revived old religions and practised secret mysteries.

“He said that he had direct revelations from heaven, gave proofs that he possessed a thorough and intuitive knowledge of all languages, even those of the beasts and birds, and also stated that he could traverse space as he pleased, and that the innermost heart of man lay open to him.

“He travelled to India by Nineveh and Babylon, conferring with the magi of these cities, and in India was received with marked confidence and respect by Hiarchus, the chief of the Brahmins. All his teachings and example went to repress the licentiousness and moral depravity of the age. As a reformer he accomplished wonders. At Athens he abolished the gladiatorial exhibitions; also at Corinth, Lacedæmonia and Crete his pure and stern example did much good. Protected by some strange occult power he rebuked Nero, as he afterwards did Domitian, who, unable to

destroy him, banished him from Rome. In Egypt he was followed by prodigious multitudes, and consulted by Vespasian, whom he advised to rule with justice and moderation. When the mad Domitian, enraged at his seditious virtue, had him arrested and sent from Asia to Rome in chains, he was already on his way to face the tyrant, and when brought before the emperor was particularly severe in his rebuke, warning him of the evil consequences of giving ear to informers, adding loftily,—‘As for myself, I have no fears. You may cause me to be seized, as I choose, but put me to death you cannot.’ Domitian listened with dread to his words and declared him innocent; thus Apollonius *passed from his presence*, and was seen that same evening at Patioli, three days’ journey from Rome.

“On the day and hour of the assassination of Domitian the sage was preaching at Ephesus, when suddenly he stopped, and, fixing his eyes on the ground, after a short silence, exclaimed,—‘Strike home! Strike the tyrant dead! Courage,’ then he looked up and said to his numerous hearers,—‘Rejoice, for Domitian is no more. Stephanus has just now struck the blow.’

“His friend Nerva succeeded Domitian, and invited him at once to Rome, but he replied by letter, sent by Damis, his disciple, that by the decree of fate they would see each other no more in the body, yet he gave much excellent political advice, and while his disciple Damis was on the way he embarked at Ephesus for Lindus, in the Island of Rhodes, and was never afterwards seen.”

They were gliding softly through space as Philip imparted to her these historical items, her head on his breast and her eyes looking into his with admiring tenderness, while he held her in his arms and watched

the world over which they floated so insensibly yet so rapidly. It was a past world they were floating over, a world of water first, and then over a land rich with cities, temples, monuments, obelisks, sphinxes, pyramids, fertile fields and gardens, with countless ditches, lakes and canals, all drawn from the broad river that rushed so smoothly between those fertile banks and architectural marvels.

"Beloved, we are in Egypt!" he exclaimed, pointing beneath them.

Adela glanced down upon the magnificent works and landscape over which they were passing with dreamy indifference, and then up again with the entranced look of adoration to that strangely young face of the one who was her own for ever.

It was all so new yet and wonderful this transformation wrought by death. On earth she had been so unutterably weary and lonely, and with her heart so hopeless and old, now she was a girl with a girl's freshness united to the intensity of a woman, and he, her mate, so buoyant, so beautiful, so strong, so youthful, and yet so tender and world-wise. All places and states seemed alike while he was with her, to hold her as he was holding her now, and this ecstatic bliss was to continue throughout eternity. How good and tenderly considerate the Maker of souls was to make them in pairs—the man and the woman. The sun was setting over great Thebes, the capital of the Pharaohs, when they alighted, with the Nile, a broad band of gold, and the buildings ruddy in the ardent glow.

They came to earth on a smooth terrace or landing-place close to the river against which the ancient square boats were moored, while all round them were walls, streets filled with people of both sexes, stately

columns and massive portals covered with paintings.

On this landing-place two forms waited for them, one a white-robed priest with shaven head, and the other, a venerable figure, tall and straight, with flowing beard and hair, both snowy and long. The priest wore sandals, but this majestic figure was barefooted and bareheaded, with a loose, light robe of linen. One glance at his lofty brow, grave eyes and noble features showed Philip in whose presence he stood.

"Apollonius Tyaneus," he said, bending before the sage, who advanced to meet them, and held out both hands over their heads in a benediction.

"All hail! son and daughter. I was asked to meet you here and be your guide for a time."

The sage paused for a moment to allow them to recover the awe which his presence caused them, and then he continued in a quiet voice,—

"You now see ancient Thebes as it was in the earlier dynasties, down to the reign of Amenophis the Fourth, who named himself Khu-u-atus, who, with the aid of my friend here, his high priest, brought back to its original simplicity the ancient faith, after its true significance and purity had been clouded by gross superstition for ages. It is the same faith which comforts the Christians and other sects at present in the world. The faith of the reasoning Brahmin, Buddhist, Persian and so-called pagan. The belief and knowledge of an eternal life and an everlasting and almighty Source, who gives but does not destroy."

Amenophis had the true revelation and became a reformer, suffering as all reformers do from bigotry and priestcraft. He learnt that the God of creation was not the God of burnt offerings and death, but

rather the God of productiveness and beauty and universal good. The Christians have not yet learnt this great truth, but they will do so yet, as the Egyptians, the Brahmins and the scholars did. He moved from Thebes because superstition had encrusted it with unexplained symbolism, and custom is the strongest of tyrants to crush. He moved, and founded another city, yet Thebes must ever be regarded as the mother of modern cities, and it is a goodly sight.

It was a wonderful sight, this city with its swarming population and refined luxuries. Philip and Adela became, with Apollonius, the guests of this priest in the temple of Amour, and had ample opportunities of judging the daily life of this ancient race of hard workers and ardent pleasure-seekers. They still continued, as they had lived of yore, industrious and just in their laws, striving during their lifetime to win a good record afterwards. They had won their reward now and were of the blest, yet still they had not altered in their daily life.

Philip saw an Arab dhow pass by while they still watched the purple twilight on the river. He saw that the passengers were mortal and modern from the tourist costumes. They were laughing loudly and passing inane remarks about the ruins, but they could not see that mighty multitude who moved to and fro paying no heed to these nineteenth century innovations. The tourists passed oblivious, and the busy city lived its life. The flesh-controlled blind, and the freeborn indifferent, to what was passing.

The city of Thebes, as it was now presented to Philip and Adela, was as it had been in its most palmy days of prosperity, only that the spirits of

the embalmed ones had simplified their ceremonials. The hieroglyphics were there, but they were no longer signs only for the priesthood to read, but for all the people. The priests could no longer hide their craft or make mysteries, therefore they no longer posed as superiors. The Pharaohs who returned were no longer regarded as sacred, yet they were tolerated when they pleased to act the king as portion of the pageantry which amused the spectators. They were a people much given to ceremonials and feasting, and over each feast a Pharaoh sat at the head of the table, as the mummy was still carried round at the end of the repast before the drinking began. The formula used had no significance now, for they had all passed the dark portals, and still could eat and drink as of old, yet the bearers cried out still,—“Look on this, drink, and enjoy thyself, for such as this is thou hast been and art.”

Philip and Adela spent some weeks in Egypt, visiting the different cities with their guide and admiring the splendours of the buildings which Philip had before seen in their decay, for he had been to Egypt formerly in his mortal lifetime. Now the sands appeared scooped away from the yellow and rose-tinted sandstone temples—the paint and enamel were fresh and new—the grey granite obelisks and sphinx avenues. The gardens were extensive and in order, the fields regularly watered and green, so that they no longer wondered at it being called the treasure-house of the world. Order and system were everywhere displayed, while there appeared no poverty nor oppression, for they were a gay and junketing race.

They were feasted in elegant halls, with the walls and ceilings painted gorgeously, where the tables and

chairs were beautifully carved from foreign woods—ebony, cedar and mahogany—and inlaid with mother-of-pearl, gold and silver, and the lamps were rare works of art. Vases of perfumes and flowers were lavishly scattered about. The guests came to these feasts in chariots and palanquins, and when admitted were washed, perfumed, anointed and garlanded with roses, violets and lotus flowers. Musician played, incense was burnt, and punkahs and fans waved, and dancers danced.

As in Atalantis, the servants of to-day might be the guests of to-morrow, for equality had been one of their first lessons after death which they had learnt. It was easy for a Pharaoh to become a servant, for during his earth life his duties as ruler had been harder and his liberty more restricted than the meanest in his land. Philip and Adela saw many of the past kings and queens at these feasts pouring out the wine and washing the guests' feet, yet all were happy.

During the evenings they would stand on the housetops, with their pillared sides and upper roofs, and look over the city, which swarmed with people and chariots at this hour, while along the river the gay boats floated past, filled with serenaders, and watched by crowds from the landing-steps. It was a land of life, movement and merriment, beautiful by day, and blazing with coloured lanterns and lamps at night. Except for the difference of costume, colour and architecture, there was not much difference between the daily life of Egypt four and five thousand years ago and the modern life of a rich and prosperous country of to-day.

"Mankind has ever been the same," said their

guide, "with their pleasures and their pains, their tyrants and their slaves, their wealth and their poverty. We have still the pleasures left, but the tyranny and slavery have ceased, and what these spirits do here in their hours of rest, is because it affords them a pleasure to return to the customs and play of their earth life, as old men will return, after long wandering, to the homes of their childhood. These Egyptians were a wise and humane people in many things: their laws were just, and their innate knowledge of the spiritual world not far from correct, therefore the change with them has been less violent than with some other races, such as the Assyrians, Greeks and Romans. Hie we to Nineveh and Babylon now?"

"Yes," answered Philip, who had had his curiosity fully satisfied. He had lived and talked with the fathers and mothers of nations, stood with the august Pharaoh and Nitocris by the side of their own mummy cases; had the philosophies and secret mysteries explained to him by the same sages who had initiated Moses. He had conversed with the once mighty Rameses, and beheld that serpent of old Nile, the syren Cleopatra. Yes, his soul was satisfied with the lore and wonders of old Egypt; he was ready to hie to Babylon with his erudite and matchless guide.

For months they wandered as the thought seized them, now to Nineveh and Babylon, where they beheld those once fierce, warlike and haughty masters of human destiny—Nimrod and Ninus, with the great Queen Semiramis, also the monarch Nebuchadnezzar who did his penance while yet in the flesh, and thus escaped much after tribulation.

What ages it must have taken to humble the pride

of those fierce and remorseless tyrants, was a thought to make Philip shudder. The flames of hell they must have passed through before they became even humanised. Apollonius sighed as he answered the thought.

“Yes, it takes many ages to teach an earth monarch like one of these, his true position in the eternal scheme, and many have to work hard for his salvation. Yet he has our pity, because the unlucky circumstances of birth have forced this evil lot upon him. Jehovah spoke plainly to Moses on the mountain, and warned him against this curse as He warned him against the savage craving for flesh which his followers had expressed. Again He spoke to Samuel against the evils they were bringing upon themselves when they would have a tyrant. Alas! it was a sorry elevation they gave the poor spirits, a limited number of years of god-like power to commit crime with impunity, to be paid for by after ages of degradation and misery. Happily the effects of evil are not all-enduring, so that the vilest may hope for liberty and reason at last.”

Semiramis, the once fierce and deadly, came to them with the gentleness and charity of Hesperia. In her own land a certain pathos blended with her majesty of grace, for all round her were her former victims who had helped her out of her hell, and she was humble and grateful to them. The grandeur still remained to Assyria, but there was no more fear and trembling amongst the multitude. The past wrongs had been forgiven, and peace reigned over the land with plenty.

They visited Troy, and saw the famous Helen and Paris, with the bard Homer and the heroes of his *Iliad*. All lived now in harmony, for they had found their proper mates, and the mistakes of the past were

condoned. They visited the Greeks, that race of subtle liars, skilful artists and patriotic robbers. It was pleasant to linger in Ionian waters and find that even they had learnt to appreciate truth and honesty.

"It did not take so long to redeem this race as you might suppose," said the sage Apollonius, "for they were a large-brained and adaptable people, and patriotism, like charity, covers a multitude of vices."

They passed through India; and here Philip had reason to congratulate himself with having such a guide, for he learnt much, and, when they quitted that land, felt that he had made a decided advance in his spiritual education. Here he met men, who by sacrifices had been able, like Enoch, to retain their flesh, or rather escape the great ordeal death. They were devoted to mankind, and preferred remaining amongst their erring fellows and aiding them, rather than enjoy the felicity of the perfectly free.

"I belong to this order of men," said Apollonius gently. "I have not passed as you have, but have existed through the ages as a man, and so I shall continue, by choice, until humanity has conquered self and vain desires, and what you call the millennium comes."

They saw Israel in its glory, and Rome in its days of strength, with its vices purified and its virtues strengthened; and then, satisfied with what they had seen, and saturated with the wisdom of the past, the desire for work and duty came upon them.

"We have learnt enough from the past, Adela," said Philip, while the master smiled approvingly. "We must now return to our kind, and help in the eternal labour."

"I am ready, Philip," answered Adela fondly, as she looked in his eyes.

"Then farewell, my brother and sister. We shall meet again. If you need help it shall be given to you."

It was at Rome where they parted, and as they stood overlooking the city of seven hills, where the old world and the new blended together like a soft mist, the temples of the ancient gods and goddesses mingling with and limning somewhat the dome of St Peter and the many Christian spires and domes, a vision loomed over the golden crucifix—Aphrodite with a pale halo and a purple robe, Antoninus hanging on a cross.

"Farewell," said Apollonius, as he slowly drifted from their vision. "The sacrifice of self is the supremest good."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE CAPTAIN'S GIG.

DENNIS MACBRIDE had done his best to provide for the necessities of the three remaining Anarchists with the short time at his disposal before the abandonment of the schooner. He had seized up and slung into the boat a cask of water. They had several bottles of spirits, a case of biscuits, and as many tins as he could lay hold of, in the hurry, of preserved meat; and that was all.

They had been now on the waste of waters twenty days without seeing a sail or a vision of land, and their limited stock of stores was exhausted, all except two bottles of rum. They had studied the strictest economy, limiting themselves to one biscuit per day, with one drink of the brackish water, qualified with the spirits and helped along with a flavouring of the preserved meat, suffering all the time inordinate pangs of hunger and thirst, with the fierce sun beating mercilessly upon them, and the pitiless glaring of that blue ocean.

The briny ozone, so health-producing and appetising

to invalids who have plenty on shore, added to the intensity of their sufferings with this strictly enforced abstinence. They had endured during these twenty days a hell of agony, which the starvation diet and limited drink only intensified.

Often had they been inclined to say "Let us eat, drink and die"; but the desire to escape helped them to overcome that mad craving of nature. Yet they seemed no nearer escape, and the provisions were exhausted. The last meat tin had been licked, the last biscuit munched, and the last drain of water emptied out. Now only the two bottles of fiery spirits remained, while the water-cask had opened and was like tinder inside and out.

They were all as attenuated as saints in the desert. The hair of the baroness had grown dry and grey, her cheeks were like parchment drawn tightly over the cheek bones with great hollows, her brown eyes were dim and quenched, and her arms, breasts and limbs, which she had once been so proud of, were shrunken and dry almost as those of an Egyptian mummy. So she lay at the bottom of the boat passive and hopeless, while the two men sat in the stern and sucked their thumbs in a wolfish manner.

The doctor was a skeleton; he had always been gentlemanly in his figure and slender, now he was like a ghoul, unwashed, with tangled beard and matted hair, and black eyes that glared with ravenous and hellish discontent out from fissures of bone.

Dennis had been fleshy and gross, he was now large-boned and ferocious, like the starved boar that he was, his little blue eyes blazing like sapphires set within rubies, his white and bushy eyebrows overhanging those angry caverns, the cheek bones protruding, and the

stubbly red beard all bristly and horrible; added to these his fang-like teeth, blackened with tobacco chewing, that showed up, now that the contracted muscles of the upper lip had drawn it back in a beast-like snarl. A savage of prodigious strength still and ravenous desires, with his freckled skin, like the others, baked almost black with twenty days of neglect and tropical sunshine.

He was speaking in a husky and horrible whisper while the doctor listened.

"When the Indians are on the march, and grub becomes scarce, they tomahawk their women, and wolf them. She won't last long, and every day will dry her up more. What's the good of keeping her?"

The baroness had fawned upon, kissed and fondled this uncouth monster on the island, but he owed her no gratitude for that.

"She isn't half the bulk she was three days ago; she'll go most likely to-morrow, and then there won't be any moisture in her—it will be like chewing one's boots."

"You seem to know about these affairs," said the doctor.

"I have been lost at sea before, therefore, of course, I do know how they taste, if it is put off too long," replied Dennis huskily. "She won't be much good now, but to-morrow she'll be worse."

"Wait till night, comrade, and then you can do as you like with her; I don't care to take that kind of feast in daylight."

They sat together, and watched the thin figure of the woman at their feet, as a cat watches a canary, all through the afternoon. She did not move, but lay as if asleep, insensible to all as yet, for women develop

patience and passivity in physical suffering. Delirium had not yet come on as it might to-morrow, yet, although suffering the pangs of the damned, she did not speak nor move; so had she lain for the past four days without moving.

How slow that fierce enemy of theirs, the sun, seemed to be in the withdrawing of its intolerable glare, which had been fixed upon them without surcease all the day, first on their backs, frizzling their spinal chords, then on their heads, baking their brains, and next on their breasts, sucking the life-blood from their hearts. The white heat of morning and midday changed to the yellow flame of afternoon, soon to become like incandescent charcoal, red-hot and glowing.

Thus had they watched the pitiless avenger day after day, for they had been drawn back into the latitudes of calms. Its rising up, with what seemed to them mocking gaiety, like a cruel savage refreshed with sleep, and preparing for his day of slow torture by laughing gibes at his chained victims, then gathering intensity and strength as he warmed to his work, finally to sink back flushed and wearied with his unrelaxed vigil. This was how the sun in its different phases during the day appeared to them. They cursed it deeply and hopelessly while they waited for the coming of darkness.

They did not care how they drifted now, for they had no knowledge of where they were, no strength left to pull an oar, even if it had been worth while to pull, for where they lay they had as much prospect of being picked up, perhaps, as by moving about aimlessly. While they remained still, the hope still fed them that they might be in the right quarter for a passing steamship, whereas by roving they might only go out of the course, which was a maddening thought not be

dwelt upon. They had neither sail, mast nor covering of any kind, so that even if the breezes came, they could not avail themselves of them ; they were helpless, and must wait as they were.

Not a break on the wide spread of ultra-marine waters ; yes, only a tiny, yet terribly significant, sign that they were not entirely isolated from other life, two black triangular objects lying parallel to each other, with a space of five feet between, like two little fishing buoys, constantly reminded them that the patient equatorial shark, the largest of all his tribe, was also watching for food when anything chanced to look that way. He was alone, with his little friend the pilot fish, darting to and fro, and reporting progress to him, but he never stirred from his position any more than did the small boat, with its sun-baked and shrunken boards, through the seams of which the water gurgled in, which Dennis had so frequently to bail out. That was the only effort that Dennis made, but the patient and watchful shark made none. He rested his huge bulk, just hidden all but those betraying fins, not ten feet distant from them, and he had remained in this juxtaposition for days, a grim sentinel that nothing could tire out.

At night he was there still, for it was then that the boat made some drifting, which movement the watcher imitated. In the dark it was more terrible to look at than during the day, for as it moved the phosphorescent waters were stirred and lit up with blue flames, which revealed his vast proportions, and perhaps exaggerated them, to the horrified gaze of the spectators ; any object passed through those waters seemed to set them ablaze, and leave a lurid trail behind it.

Heavy dews fell at night, for which they were thank-

ful at the time, although afterwards in the early hours of the morning they sat drenched and shivering with cold, almost wishing for the torturing sun to rise and warm them before it began to scorch and blister. Yet the dews did them little good, for they only chilled their skins but did not slake their thirst, while it made their torment the next day all the more acute.

As yet they had been sparing on the spirits, for none of them had the vice of drunkenness added to their other vices; they had enough and to spare without this degradation. They knew also from past experience that the rum would not alleviate their sufferings, although it might terminate them the more rapidly when they had given up hope. As yet that stimulant of the soul had not quite left them, desperate as their present fortunes were.

They had for the past five nights varied their watching the movements of the shark by looking at the growing moon. It had come first a golden crescent upon the green space, now it would give them light enough for the fell work before them.

Slowly the sun went down in the west, while from the eastern horizon the incomplete moon rose and looked upon them as if with a backward glance, gradually gaining lustre as the daylight died out of the sky until they lay within the silver track of its reflection. The hour had come for the sacrifice of the woman.

"You know better than I do where to cut so as to get the most blood without any waste, doctor?" said Dennis, in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes," answered the doctor. "Where the weasel attacks is the best for that purpose, the jugular; one

incision with my penknife will do that—but I am not going to kill her.”

“No; I’ll do that part of the job. My fist is still strong enough to fell some men and most women; one blow on her ear and she will be as dead as a rabbit.”

As he spoke, the gaunt beast began to roll his shirt sleeves up, while the doctor looked away towards the triangular fins of the shark.

He felt Dennis move from his side and crawl over the prostrate baroness towards her head, for she now lay feet towards them on her back. She might have been already dead for all the motions she made as Dennis crawled weakly and stiffly over her. Then a pause came in the rocking of the boat, and next moment a sickening thud with the sound of crushing bones told him that the deed was done, and that their awful repast was ready.

“Come, doctor, do your part now,” shouted Dennis in a cracked voice, and at the word the doctor rose up, and pulling out his penknife, opened the smaller blade and advanced to his task.

Man, in his civilized state, feels a much more sinful animal than does the primeval man, and remorse or conscience is a cultivated production entirely. The original cannibal, who has been born to the habit, has no after effects, unless it may be repletion from an over indulgence of the savoury food, which might produce a nightmare of horror, but that is all the horror that he suffers from. The rat, rabbit or cat may devour their own young at times, yet they appear to have no remorse for the unnatural offence, nor are they avoided or repudiated by their own kind. Life goes on the same with them as before. No madness seizes upon their brains; indeed, if anything, they appear to be supremely

satisfied with their actions and contented with the result.

The doctor had been accustomed most of his life to good cookery, and therefore, perhaps, a raw beefsteak would have given him, if he had not been so hard pressed, as much horror to contemplate as a raw baroness, yet the "devil drives when need drives." He had not tasted fluid for forty-eight hours and, like his comrade, he was desperate.

A peculiar sense of repugnance and loathing passed over him as he bared the throat of the dead woman, while he abhorred her with an intensity that was irresistible; then all at once those unworthy emotions towards that poor victim whom they had sacrificed to their necessities, passed from his mind, and a servile admiration took the place. Her breast was white and soft, if thin now, for with her sex's vanity she had protected it as well as she could from those sun glances. In the second glance which the scientist gave her she appeared to him as a beautiful martyr.

Then all at once the privation and wild-beast instinct woke up within him, the thirst and hunger-lust which holds man still the slave of the earth. He was a tiger and a fox combined. In an instant he had relapsed ages, when conscience was a sentiment unknown to man. The blue, round, snowy breasts did not appeal to his cultivated senses now, except as the child and the beast regard them, soft pillows to rest against while they suck.

"Who is to drink first, before I cut, comrade?"

Horrible words and awful title at such a time, with this dead and warm woman lying before these savages, ready, as woman ever is, to be the mother and feed her sons, natural and adopted, with her milk or with her blood. Oh, woman! who would not overlook your

caprices and frailties when we think of your sacrifices and abrogations since the world began.

The mother lay before them, passive and ready to yield to their necessities, while the adopted sons faced each other.

"Let's draw lots, that's the fairest way," said Dennis.

"Yes," answered the doctor, and from his pocket he drew an envelope, frayed and dirty. Tearing off two pieces, one longer and the other shorter, he turned his back for a moment on his comrade, and arranged them, then he turned once more. "Draw!"

Dennis was lucky, he had first drink from that life fluid.

The two men knelt down together while the doctor made his incision in the thin throat, then he drew back and watched, with ravenous eyes, the moon, while his companion fastened his thirsty lips to the orifice and glutted himself from the still warm blood. After a time, which seemed to be an eternity to the waiting one, Dennis drew back with a sigh of infinite bliss and content, and straightway fell asleep by the side of the fragile victim. Then the doctor had his turn, and gleaned strength and comfort from the warm and ruddy draught, until he also was overcome and forgot to drink.

While both slept calmly and dreamlessly, the moon sailed above them and the dead woman, casting that backward glance over them with that strange grotesque humanising leer which the moon at this stage expresses.

The woman lay serenely by the side of the men with her naked bosom exposed and marble-like, and her still face once more beautiful in its chaste repose.

The shark also drew some feet closer to the boat, wondering, as he sniffed in those warm fumes, if his time had not also arrived.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE COMPRADO IDYL.

A YEAR had passed since Eugene, Countess de Bergamont, and the plain Captain Anatole had taken up the threads of life together; and although they were not doing very well, from a commercial point of looking at prosperity, yet they were satisfied, and, therefore being contented with their fate; they might be said to be doing well. It is all a comparative affair our doing well or ill. For instance, we may be doing very well on eighteen shillings per week to those who are only making twelve, yet we are badly enough off to the bloated, aristocratic, yet hungry-visaged, clerk who starves on thirty shillings. We are miserable objects also to the hard-up man on five pounds per week as we are wonders to the pauper on five hundred per year.

If our women think we are doing well on twelve shillings per week, then we are doing very well indeed. If our wives think we are miserable wretches on one or five thousand per annum, then we are indeed miser-

able wretches and hardly worth the burying. It all depends upon our women how well off or how ill off we men are.

Eugene, Countess de Bergamont, loved her man Anatole, therefore they were prosperous on nothing per year. She had been accustomed in her former life to waste and profusion—jewels and knickknacks, fine dresses and fragrant waters. Now she was reduced to the state of primitive woman who had to snatch from Nature the bare necessities of life with stern and hard exertion, which skinned her hands and blistered her face, yet she was happier than she had been in her days of profuseness and wanton waste, for she had Anatole to share all these privations with her, and no one else to interfere. No prosperous couple to force comparison and make her discontented. She was alone with her man, therefore they were rich and happy. The summer was a short one on Comprado Island, yet while it lasted it was beneficent and cheerful. Flowers and herbs bloomed on the hill sides and in the valleys, and they were not likely to starve.

They went so far inland, and gradually relapsed into the primitive stage of existing. The rivers provided them with fish, which they prepared, as their ancestors had done before them, by making fire from friction when their civilised matches were exhausted. They found insects and birds with their eggs to supply them with food, herbs and native vegetables and roots to supply them with what they required for a change in diet, with fresh water without stint.

Anatole's clothes and boots wore out, so did the fashionable costume of Eugene's, then they had recourse to expedients, and managed to cover themselves to keep out the cold. They watched the departure of their

former companions, and then took possession of their vacated cavern, working hard, both, against the coming winter, and laying in a store of provisions. It was happy work, for both were interested in it, for they had not lost their love fervour. She was a woman in ten thousand, Anatole thought, so robust and hardy, a veritable comrade in daring and endurance. He was the man of the moment to her, who was able to surmount the difficulties of their position, scale the cliffs with fearless grip, snare the birds, capture the eggs, spear the seals, sea-elephants, sea-leopards and sea-lions. There was no fear of starving with such a hunter and fisher as Anatole, no fear of weariness with such a cook as Eugene.

They had discovered coal on the island, and peat mosses, and laid in a store against winter. It was work from sunrise to sunset, and delight in each other's arms from sunset till sunrise. This was their life, a life of hard work and compensating love, and that was more than enough to make them rich and happy.

He praised her for what she did for him, and she was supremely blest and savagely exultant to do more. She extolled his strength, agility and fearlessness, and he felt like a god. All day they toiled to emulate each other's activity, so that they might coo at night in each other's arms, and feel that they were worthy mates. The past drifted from them. They were beasts who lived for one another, yet each kiss was a thrilling rapture, and each night a draught of delight.

All through the summer they worked hard for the coming winter, and all through the winter they warmed one another with their love. The countess had never known love before, but now she knew and appreciated it.

They were both strong and hardy, and their daily life made them more so, therefore they did not suffer much in their isolation. They had prepared the seals' flesh by drying and smoking it, and cured the skins; also they had fuel enough to cook it, so they passed through the long winter safely in their caves, and could wait for spring to go out again.

Anatole wanted no more than this woman. He had, since he first knew her, remembered her as something superior to him, though he did not tell her so, for man never likes to confess his inferiority. One day, before spring came, she whispered something in his ear, which gave him the master's thrill of power and possession, while it filled his brain with a vague sense of responsibility.

"Anatole, we are both children of the Church; we must get away from here and be blessed before our baby comes, if we can."

Where were their Atheism and Anarchical principles now? The woman had woke up, and the man followed her obediently, as man ever will follow the woman he loves.

They had not gone far inland, nor attempted much discovery on this island. The snow in the mountain ranges quickly stopped their progress, therefore they had remained in the valleys for a time, fishing and snaring birds, at which Anatole was an adept. They also found on these rough and boggy moors what was of most consequence to them during the winter, large patches of peat.

It was in the first cavern that they discovered the coal to burn with their peat. Together they penetrated a good way into its depths, and there saw the fossilised remains of many past forests.

It is much easier to hark back to savage life than for savages to advance towards civilisation. Anatole did not take long to make fishing-tackle from the bones and sinews of the birds, nor implements of labour from the flints that surrounded them. What had taken primitive man ages to acquire he learnt to do very quickly.

They had thread and fish-bone needles to make seal-skin moccasins, leggings and mantles long before their own clothes wore out. They also found mud-holes near the fresh water lakes and streams. This mud served them for soap, so that they could wash themselves—a very strict necessity to Eugene, who was dainty and cleanly in her habits, much more so than Anatole, who considered a roll in the sand and a plunge in the water, fresh or salt, was enough in the way of ablution.

How quickly they had both learnt to be natural. Modesty is no more natural than is morality; both are products of an artificial education, which outrages Nature at every turn. Yet love is always delicate, tender and considerate, and both were deeply in love, therefore they never relapsed into coarseness any more than the animals do. He was her god, whom she had learnt to worship, his hands, feet, arms and legs as well as his face. All that composed him were objects of adoration to her, as her dainty body was to him, a precious treasure to love and cherish. They babbled to each other, as the birds do during courting season, meaningless words of tenderness and adoration, praising each other's parts, as connoisseurs rave over old master-pieces, the colour, the texture, the form, and in this fashion they extolled the Maker of all these perfections.

If the Creator of the universe is capable of being flattered for His works, the repetition of lovers, so ridiculous to callous outsiders, must be a sweet pleasure,

sweeter than the gross adulation of the hell-believers, for the lovers mean what they utter.

They kept themselves carefully out of the way while the *George Washington* anchored in the harbour. Anatole knew how long the sealers would be about, therefore the pair sought another part of the coast, and worked as hard during the summer months, laying up and curing their stores for winter. After they had watched the schooner sail away, they carried their stock down to the cave and prepared.

During those summer months Eugene had laid in a store of health and strength that would last her for many a year. She often wondered at her own vitality, vigour and lightness. She had lost something of her velvety softness and delicacy perhaps, her cheeks were rougher, and her muscles harder, yet what once would have made her shrink and shiver and bend herself double with abject misery, now made her square her magnificent chest defiantly and exult. Those cold, fierce blasts no longer stung her like lead-tipped whips; they imparted vigour; she opened her fine nostrils and inhaled them with refreshment, and often bared her neck, now ruddy, to this rude but wholesome buffeting.

The vices of super-refinement and civilisation fell from her as a dead skin does after fever. Once chloral and absinthe were necessities to her vitiated system, now the Antarctic ozone was anodyne enough. She became a fresh woman, lusty, strong and ardent, like the goddesses of old, or the female field workers. Her breasts and limbs were bulwarks, and her heart a steady machine that did its work and sent warm blood rushing freely through her throbbing veins. She was no longer a lady filled with morbid fancies and unwholesomenesses, but a woman fervent and keen, with

blue eyes that glowed sapphire-like from their setting of pure white, with lips that were ruddy and ripe, and all the past eradicated as if it had never been.

It seemed only right to her to blister her hands working for this man of her heart and to his orders. What although the nails were not so shapely or clean, or the skin hard that smoothed his matted locks? what although her rich tresses fell tangled like brushwood over her shoulders, and her body was swathed in shapeless furs? she cast the furs from her when night came, and held him in her strong arms until day called him from her, and he was satisfied, this glorious man whom she adored.

This was marriage, the glorification of womanhood, and now the God of love had condoned her past offences and given her the best reward. The joy which he had given to her moved within her with a constant thrill.

Anatole was a simple man who had been roughly brought up. The countess, to him, was a marvellous creature with her refined ways and intensity. She carried him along on the wings of her passion, and even while he could not fathom all her intricacies and devotion, still he felt proud and humbled with his conquest of this matchless creature. She was sincere. This he could not possibly doubt, therefore he took the gifts that the gods had sent him, and strove to prove worthy of them. He was her slave, yet she had crowned him lord and master, and therefore he tried his hardest to act up to his character as master. Thus they were both content, she idealising him, and he doing his best to fill out and play his part.

He had never been a lover of books. In open air sports, such as football, wrestling and running, he had excelled in his boyhood. His youth had been spent at

sea and adventure in foreign lands. He was a true primitive man by instinct.

Drawn into the bloody order by a fluke, he hadn't done much for it, nor raised himself very high in the ranks, although his courage and honesty had been noted. He was one of the men that desperate organisms use as sacrifices and blind tools, without trusting with too many secrets.

As a savage he was super-excellent and might well have become a chief, for he had a perfect physique, a fine and swarthy face, with expressive brown eyes, a handsome and lithe figure, with brains and craft enough to look out for and provide for himself and his mate.

He was great when on the hunt or scaling dizzy precipices, and at such times Eugene watched his fearless and heroic actions with bated breath. He was also ingenuous and domesticated, all qualities which women rate much higher than genius in the man they live with, be they aristocratic or rustic.

Before winter came—that Antarctic winter that was murderous in its intensity—by their united efforts they had made a comfortable home of that cavern. The walls were hung with dried flesh of seals and fish, they had piled up enough fuel and cabbages, also melted tallow enough to provide them with light during the long night. The floor was carpeted with skins three and four deep to lie on, and others to cover them, while a heavy curtain of stitched skins hung in front and kept out the fierce blasts. Then they lay down and rested, content and without any desire for the benefits of civilisation. A natural man and woman. How quickly the countess had forgotten the necessity for fast novels to amuse her, and how easily she fell into the way of working, eating and sleeping, as the savage

woman does. They slept during that long winter until they were hungry, then they both got up and cooked sufficient to satisfy their hunger, lying down again happy and satisfied.

The tempest raged outside with vicious force, but they were cosy inside, and they desired no more. They had no longer any hatred for society, the world was centred in themselves.

The countess told him how she became an Anarchist, but she was no longer bitter in the relations of her wrongs. They did not appear so serious now, when she saw how easy it was to exist, and, where love is, how little else can satisfy. The fresh water from the ice-blocks was more delicious than the most costly wines, and that dried flesh, boiled or stewed, more satisfying than a dozen courses.

He also felt content as he rolled on his furs and let her administer to him, watching her matchless and hardy beauty and her tangled tresses of gold. There was no other eyes to watch them, therefore they abandoned themselves to their delights, the purely animal and natural delights of eating, sleeping and loving.

So that hard, dark, yet blissful winter passed away and spring came again to call them out to fresh exertions, and with the spring she revealed to him her happy secret, then both felt that the evil past was indeed ended for ever, and that a new life was opened to them, the life of hope and promise.

CHAPTER XXX.

DOCTOR FERNANDEZ PAYS ONE DEBT.

THE body of the baroness lasted these two wretched cannibals for six days, and then, desperate as they were, they were forced to cast the putrid remnants out to that patient hanger-on, the shark.

After this, it became a game of wild beast watchfulness. They had tasted human flesh and grown to like the flavour, therefore they were no longer human, they were crafty beasts of prey, looking out for their chance.

They knew each other's ghoulish intentions, for they read from their own feelings, to watch as long as possible and keep awake, for the one who fell first asleep was now the doomed man.

They could not risk a struggle for the mastery now in that leaky boat, in case it capsized or went down and left them both to the tender mercies of that vicious enemy so close and motionless, as he too waited and watched ; the deed must be done by treachery, and as suddenly and quietly as possible.

So they sat opposite to each other and stared at the glittering ocean or glaring skies for two more days and

nights, with bloodshot eyes and smarting lids, on which sleep pressed heavily, with throats once more dry as baked clay and tongues shrunken and hard—both horrible spectacles, with their skins drawn and of a greenish blackness, all inhuman.

Treachery and murder filled both hearts, and kept them from looking directly at one another, yet they were watching who should drop first for all that. They could not converse, for they had lost their voices, and only a hoarse and unintelligible rattle was produced when they made the attempt.

The want of sleep was making rapid havoc with their bodies and minds, occasionally an imbecile grin contorted their shrunken jaws as for an instant they forgot where they were, then they picked themselves together with a superhuman effort, and became all the more alert.

To grow delirious would be almost as bad as to fall asleep. Dennis grinned the oftenest on the second day's vigil; his body was stronger, and therefore made more savage demands for sustenance, while the doctor had been trained to do with little sleep and long intervals between. His mind also was the most crafty and self-controlled.

On the afternoon of the second day a subtle thought entered his brain. The two rum bottles still remained untouched at the bottom of the boat amongst the water that covered it. He would open one of these, and pretend to drink, knowing that Dennis must follow his example; and surely that, with the awful heat, would send him off.

Quietly, therefore, he reached down his hand and seized one of the bottles, his every action watched by his companion

Pulling out his pocket-knife (he had wanted an excuse to get out and open that knife), with the careful method in which he did everything, he passed the blade round the neck, and then, gently tapping it, was able to wrench out the cork with the thick rim, then he silently held the open bottle to Dennis.

Dennis looked at it with wolfish longing for a moment, yet had the strength left to refuse the offer by a shake of his head. Then the doctor, pouring some on his hand, laved his brow and throat and wrists with the fluid, and, half-turning aside, held the bottle to his blackened lips and feigned to drink, all the while letting the contents run down his beard.

He longed, as he knew Dennis was doing, to let it run down his throat, yet he had sufficient strength of will to resist this deadly desire, his object being to tempt his comrade past all human endurance, and his ruse was successful, for at last, with a howl, awful to listen to, Dennis snatched the half-emptied bottle from his mouth, and put it to his own lips, doing exactly what the doctor had not done, drinking furiously.

It gurgled down his baked throat like nectar, for it was old and mellowed stuff, and slaked for a moment the intolerable thirst, while it seemed to invigorate his system, and he had relinquished for the time his purpose, forgotten it, in fact, nor till the bottle was drained did he take it from his lips, and then with a cry more human, he flung the empty bottle at the two black fins.

An instant and the water was convulsed as the monster turned and made a lightning-like snap at the bottle, while both men laughed feebly as they heard the crash of breaking glass, then Dennis croaked huskily and drowsily,—

"A good idea that of yours, doctor, the rum ; let us open the other bottle."

He reached down to lift it, but in the doing so, stumbled, and, falling against the doctor's knees, was almost instantly asleep.

The superior intellect had conquered the untrained mind ; he also felt refreshed somewhat with the spirit, as he had used it in that outward application, and got ready to finish his work.

The head of Dennis rested against his knees, face downwards, and the stertorous breathing of the sleeper rattled like stones being shaken in a calabash. It was necessary that he should be laid flat and turned about before the cannibal could accomplish his purpose, therefore gently, as only a woman and a doctor could act, he shifted his unconscious companion to the desired position, and then knelt down beside him to consider how it was to be done with safety to himself.

How dreadful that face looked as it lay with its purple flush, black lips and grinning teeth. The doctor knew that Dennis would not sleep long, also that when he woke, if he ever did, that he would be a mindless and ferocious maniac. It must be done at once, he had waited long enough. In another moment he too would be asleep.

He had nothing heavy enough to stun that thick skull, nor the strength left to do it ; only one thing remained, to get Dennis's large clasp knife and cut his throat with one swift stroke.

It seemed a pity to do this, for there would be a great waste ; no matter, he would get some before it was quite drained away.

He paused to consider no more, but, drawing the knife from the sleeper's pocket, he opened it swiftly,

and making the deep and wide cut, buried his face within the bloody gash, like a savage wolf, and drank greedily while he clasped the quivering body in his arms.

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Vengeance and destruction are fixed laws of Nature, and until the earth is swept clear of tyrants, with their accumulations of wrong scattered, the oppressed cry out for blood.

"Ours is a noble Cause, for we are the retributive ministers of countless hordes of martyrs. I have gained nothing personal by my efforts. My father and mother fell willing victims to the Cause for which they educated me from my birth. What money I have made has been spent upon it. The fortune of the woman whom I married for that alone, was flung into the general coffers. She also became a victim, for I spared her no more than I did others, than I have done myself.

"I slew my comrades, it is true, but only because I thought my own life of more value to the Cause than theirs, not that I wished life for itself.

"I am no traitor ; put me in the van where death is, so that I may do my share, and die like a true brother and a man, as Samson did when he avenged himself on the Philistines."

Dr Fernandez lay in the open boat, raving mad. He imagined that he was pleading for his character before his own comrades, and that he had been accused.

"Who are these who charge me? Anatole who lost the most valuable prize that I ever won for the Cause? Eugene who broke her oath and left us for Anatole. The baron, the count, the prince—what a crowd of false witnesses to accuse me, when it should be Anatole, the weak and boasting traitor.

"The baroness and Dennis, the brute. Ha! ha! they should be both dead enough now, comrades, yet they stand there grinning and say I did it for selfish motives, and I give them both the lie direct. Send for my wife, the poor victim whose fortune I first gave up. She was not one of us, and yet did so much to help us. She can vouch for my honesty and good faith to my oath, even if she cannot say much for my affection and consideration for her. Send for Adela. Where is she, since the others are here?"

"She also is here to help you still in all she can, although she never was your wife."

"Would that she had never been my wife, for her own sake and mine also at this bitter hour," muttered the dying man huskily. "I did her the greatest wrong that man can do to woman, yet it was for the Cause—the Cause only that I did that wrong."

"I forgive you for what you have done to me."

"Then all the rest counts as nothing to me."

The shark still waited at his post, waited for that last man, and the little boat, gaping now at every seam, was more than half-filled with water, for there was no one now to bail out. The dying man had slid from his seat, and now reclined with his head against it and his attenuated and shrunken body submerged. He seemed to have shrank to two-thirds of his former size, so that the shark would not get much of a feast for all his patience after the boat sank, yet he knew, with that unfailing instinct, as he watched the gunwale come down nearer to the surface of the water, that the long-deferred moment was approaching, and he drew closer, with his small attendant, the mackerel-like pilot-fish.

He could not see his coming victim, neither could he see those who were attending the last moments. Adela and her husband, Philip, supporting the head of the incarnate demon who had robbed her of her earth happiness as well as her earth fortune, with the other accusing victims who, drawn to him, crowded round him with stern or mocking eyes.

"How delicious that glass of water tasted which you gave me just now — yes, I was very thirsty, Adela ; I have suffered much from thirst lately, and hunger also, but I am no longer hungry nor thirsty, yet I could take a few more grapes — ah, that was good of you to bring me your pardon and those delicacies. Now that you are looking after me, I shall be able to sleep without any fear."

His heavy eyelids closed as he murmured these last words, while, after a rattle or two in his throat, his panting breath ceased and his lower jaw fell.

"Come, Philip, my love, help me with this miserable man."

Then, as the boat went down with its light load, and the shark darted after it to the dark depths, Philip and Adela, holding the shivering and terrified spirit between them, swept away, followed by that vast crowd of accusers.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANATOLE AND EUGENE FIND HAPPINESS.

As winter passed away Eugene and Anatole were able once more to leave their cavern and look after getting a fresh supply of food.

Eugene was not of so much use to Anatole as she had been the summer before, yet she would not be left behind, a deep tenderness filled her whole being, also a fear to be left alone and a dread lest he might be hurt in any of his adventures.

"I could not live if anything happened to you, my darling—so you must be careful for *our* sake."

Anatole kissed her fondly and promised that he would not recklessly risk his precious life.

They had resumed again their childhood's custom of saying their prayers night and morning, and this old and nearly-forgotten habit gave them a new interest in life, and seemed to bring them closer together. It was no longer merely a passion and adoration of the body but a spirit of tenderness that drew them by a thousand unseen fibres soul to soul.

"How I wish we had a prayer book here, Anatole,

for I can only remember the Creed, Paternoster and 'Hail Mary,' but there are prayers to 'Our Mother,' which, if repeated regularly for a time, gives one their wishes if lawful. We are married, of course, Anatole, in the eyes of God ; do you not believe so ?”

“Yes,” replied Anatole with sturdy conviction, as he embraced her.

“I have not been a good woman in the past, dearest, yet I have told you all that past and how I abhor it now. You would make me your wife in the eyes of man as well as of God, would you not, Anatole, in spite of my wicked past ?”

She looked at him with piteous appeal in her lovely blue eyes, her lips quivering with emotion.

“Of course I would, Eugene, and consider myself only too lucky to have the privilege. But why trouble about that now ? When our chance comes we will go and be married; while, as for your past—why it is only a quarter page compared to mine. I know that you never loved before, and that is good enough for me.”

“But not for me *now*, Anatole,” replied the countess sadly. “I thought nothing of these things then, when I had cast from me the Church and its teachings, as tyrannical and fabricless superstition ; but here, on this lonely land, I have had more leisure to examine myself, and think of the differences of sexes and their different obligations and duties, particularly, dearest, since another life besides my own has thrilled me. Now it is that I miss my prayer book and the little present my mother gave me called *The Imitation of Christ*, which once gave me pleasure, before I was led astray.

“I think now with so much regret and remorse on my past life. It seems nothing to me, Anatole, what you have done with your past life, for although you may

have wronged others, Nature prevented you from wronging yourself. Man is but as a sower walking along and casting the grain upon the ground, but woman is the soil on which the grain is cast. The sower passes untouched, but the soil receives whatever is cast into it, the thistle-down and the rank weeds which spread their sturdy roots and will not be eradicated, even although the plough may often turn them up and seemingly destroy them, so that the good grain becomes choked or weakened. Preachers prate of virtue and purity to women who are ripe for fruit when they would be better understood if they preached wisdom, selection and reserve. We are only gardens whom God has fenced in and prepared for *one* gardener to occupy, and if more than one is permitted to sow, the result is confusion."

"I don't follow you, my love; a garden can take and mature many crops at different times."

"The human garden cannot, for it is all pervaded with the first sowing; yet Anatole, I hope that true love may keep a constant watch and pluck out the degenerate weeds as they appear, for I want, with all my soul, our child to be your own."

She flung herself on his breast with an abandonment of rapture that he could not understand. How could a man? He only knew that she was all that was tender and delicious, and that satisfied him.

One morning, as they went along the sands after a fearful storm, they had a strange find—a little box lay in the shallow water which, when brought ashore and opened, contained a priest's vestment and stole with other articles appertaining to the sacred office, and, amongst others, a prayer book, rosary and crucifix. The book was called *The Garden of the Soul*, which no sooner did Eugene behold than she knelt down reverently and kissed.

"God has listened to us, Anatole. Here is the thirty days' prayer to the Blessed Virgin. Let us begin it at once, and within a month we will get our desires."

Anatole, who had been born a Roman Catholic, had no doubts on the subject, so he kneeled beside her, and with the crucifix set up they repeated the prayer and silently expressed the wish—she, that they might receive the sanctification of her church before her baby came, he, that she might receive her wish.

After this she went about in a more contented state of mind, yet with an air of constant expectancy; she was praying with faith, and looking out for the reward with eager confidence.

"I shall get what I want, Anatole, I know," she repeated each night with feverish exultation, as she kissed and blessed him, her own true love, her husband, and the father of her coming child.

So she began to prepare for the coming event. The softest eider-down from the birds was gathered to make a warm nest and skins, beaten out and oiled so that they might be suitable for the situation. No squaw of the Indians ever worked harder than Eugene did over this work nor exercised more loving taste.

How she longed for a woman now to teach her what to do, for this was to be her first baby, and about the duties of maternity she was totally ignorant. How bitterly she blamed her own ignorance that seemed now to be so culpable, and the false civilisation that deputed to men what every woman ought to understand as soon as she has discernment, yet on this point also she tried to have faith and prayed fervently for help.

A month and a day exactly after she had commenced her thirty days' prayer, she shut up the prayer book and arranged the cavern as if it had been a chapel, decorating it as well as she could with her limited means.

"The Blessed Virgin will answer our prayers to-night or to-morrow, Anatole, I am sure."

Her beauty had increased during these thirty days, even if she was paler and softer in expression. Anatole looked on her with a man's pride and satisfaction, particularly man in his free and savage state as Anatole then was.

They had finished supper and were resting on their skins when silently the outer curtain was drawn aside and a stranger entered—a pale-faced man, clean shaven, with the patch on his crown which expressed his order.

"God keep all here to-night," he said, as he stood before them, while both Anatole and Eugene, recognising his profession, fell on their knees before him without considering how he had come.

"Welcome, holy father."

"Will you grant me shelter, for the night is cold, and I have wandered far."

Eugene rose and bustled about to get supper for the stranger, while Anatole waited on his explanation.

"I saw a light as I passed and ventured, thinking that other wrecked souls were on this island; is it not so?"

"Yes, father, we have been here over a year."

"I have not been so long, yet, never fear, a ship will come by and by. You are husband and wife?"

"Not yet, father, but we will be if you will unite us," answered Anatole.

"Good ; I will confess you both to-night, and to-morrow I will marry you."

That night the lovers were parted for the first time for a year, yet they were happy, for they had made a good confession, and to-morrow no man could part them.

In the morning the priest consecrated their union, and when all was over he said,—

"And now farewell, my children, and be happy and faithful to your vows."

"Will you not stay with us till the next ship comes?" asked Anatole.

"No ; I can provide for myself, and I wish to see more of this island while I am here. I may see you again before you leave this island. God be with you, now let me go alone."

It appeared like a command as he uttered the words, so they let him go ; not, however, before they had laden him with presents of provisions and directions how best to cater for himself. Then he left them, walking away with his load.

They watched him go up the valley until a cliff hid him, and then they turned and embraced each other.

"Now, indeed, you are my own wife."

"Yes, Anatole ; and our baby need not blush for its parents," she replied, a happy smile irradiating her lovely face.

Three weeks after this, as Anatole lay asleep, he had a singular dream. He dreamt that a woman, young and beautiful, came into the cave and whispered something to his wife, then other females came and

formed a chain round her, as if some mystery was being enacted that he should not know, then after a time he heard the cry of a baby.

Was it all a dream? As he woke, the firelight still glowed redly, and as he turned round to his wife he heard her whisper faintly,—

“Be careful, Anatole, for our baby has come—and it is a boy.”

Then he raised himself gently, and saw that his wife held to her breast a pink and naked morsel of humanity.

“How did it happen?”

“I don’t know, Anatole; the angels of God must have helped me. Oh, I am so happy, so tired, so thirsty; get me a drink.”

Then Anatole rose up and did his duty like a good husband.

Two months passed away and the baby thrived apace, for the mother was like Venus and had milk enough and to spare. Then one afternoon a couple of whaling ships put in and began work.

“Shall we go with them back to civilisation, Eugene?” asked Anatole.

“Why should we go, unless to have the baby christened? You are happy enough here, are you not, my husband, with baby and me?”

“Yes; and you?”

“I want no other life. We are safe here. Let us not tempt Providence which has been so kind,” and Eugene turned to play with her child.

Anatole had a number of skins to spare, so he did a traffic with the whalers, getting some of their tools, which he strictly required, and a boat in exchange for his sealskins; then after

helping them in their hunting, he saw them depart with relief, for he had much to do before another winter set in.

On the evening of their departure the priest again appeared.

“The whalers have just left, father.”

“I know, but they will wait for me. I have come to baptize your boy.”

At his mother's desire he was called John ; because, she said, he showed the Grace of God.

The priest stayed with them that evening, but when they woke up in the morning they found his place empty ; he had gone away while they slept. They were once again alone with their work before them.

But they were happy and contented, forgetting the cares and vanities of the world and by the world forgot. Their island was a picturesque one and stern, requiring hard labour and constant exertion, yet no one disputed it with them ; and gradually, as time passed, they made more comforts for themselves and their children, for more followed in the footsteps of John ; indeed, the countess was a prolific wife and a noble mother.

Other ships came and brought them what they needed, such as was suitable for that climate—animals for domestic purposes—so that by and by their cavern was made into a stable, while they built better quarters for themselves ; and then they began to accumulate riches, and so lost all sympathy with Anarchism.

Other people came to the island and settled down, owning them as landlord and landlady, then the old order of things and sentiments passed away, and they adapted themselves naturally to the new.

But it was a virtuous and wholesome settlement, where men and women had to study economy and work

hard, and in this they found their delight and consolation. Anatole and Eugene have no desire to leave their adopted land, whatever their family may do in the future. They both escaped a frightful danger, yet were able to find peace and rest with Love.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FROM NIGHT TO DAY.

IN a chamber plainly yet comfortably enough furnished sat a woman, grey-tressed and haggard with passion and care more than with the lapse of years. She was one of the many self-torturers of earth—the cold, grey, implacable and melancholy believers in a demon god. This was Beatrice, the woman who had divorced her husband, Philip Mortlake, and now lived without a name, a hope, a joy.

She had been beautiful once, and still bore traces of that former beauty about her—dark, swarthy and fateful, with pronounced features and sombre brown, heavily-lidded eyes. Those daughters of Eve who are blue-eyed may be fickle, capricious, and not over earnest in what they do or say, but they seldom plunge their men into such hells of misery as those fiercely jealous, implacable and unapproachable tawny martyrs do, who follow up an idea like a Red Indian on the trail, and seldom weep, but never forgive. These are the women whose loves are slight, but their hatreds fierce; who raise up a fancied wrong into an imperishable pyramid

by patient industry, and who gloat on their pyramid growing, stone by stone, as if it were a favourite child ; who regard forgiveness as a weakness which is contemptible, and regret as an insult to their hellish pride. Jehovah, the jealous and vengeful, is the only possible God of their idolatry. The blue-eyed, fair-haired ones are fond of mirth. No woman ever yet was a humorist, yet some can appreciate humour, and it is the sanguine, blue-eyed ones who do. They may laugh, and vow, and forswear their vows, yet they can weep, and wonder at misery, and, if it lies in their power, banish it by smiles and laughter. The swarthy and melancholy woman keeps her vows, but she has no joy and gives no pleasure in them. She is dark and morbid Fate, whereas the other is tender, inconstant Earth Love, that stays but a night and a day.

She had been beautiful once, and, for a brief space, stoically affectionate and trusting, but her very love had bred snakes of suspicion in her heart. The blessings of the Church were not sufficient to sanctify her transient warmth of feelings. Her stoical nature demanded sacrifices, as the bilious temperament must have brown bread and water in preference to wine and nourishing food. If she partook of pleasure, it was to snatch at it remorsefully and hastily, and then to suffer from the surfeit. She was what the modern woman would call intense, in her morbid awakings and chronic wretchedness.

The Bible lay open before her, for she sat at a table. Its pages opened naturally at the portions she had read mostly from and reverted to, not as a consolation, but rather as caviare to whet her savage instincts. She had dreamt and brooded so long on the fabricless monsters of her fancied wrongs, that the God of vengeance was

her only consolation. Like the royal singer and sinner, she rung the changes of the one fierce and bitter desire and cry of her angry spirit: "Revenge! revenge!"

"The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble.

"Let God arise; let his enemies be scattered.

"Break their teeth, Oh God, in their mouths.

"Let them melt away as water.

"Let death seize upon them, and let them go quick down into hell."

She was reading at random from the Psalms of David—the man of mad impulse, subtle passion and ruthless violence, who never resisted a desire nor forgave a foe. Her dark eyes glowed luridly as she fixed them now on the evil words of hatred, now on the moonlit sky, which bathed the great city in its silvery lustre.

Her window was open, for it was a hot and close night in August, and the harvest moon was shining full and mellow in the upper space. From her window, which was high up on the Lambeth side of the Thames, she could see down a narrow street the river with the hay-laden barges moored at the wharf, and beyond that the silver-burnished river, so pregnant with past memories, rolling down to the sea. On the other side were warehouses and wharves, with St Paul's dome looming up misty and grand.

She had fixed upon this humble room as a lodging, partly because of that picture, partly because she wished to know more about the London poor, for she was charitable and tender towards the outside sufferers, if warped in judgment and miserable. She did not gain much love by her efforts, for her manners were harsh and fierce, and her hatred of men prejudiced the women against her. They would rather have had a less generous but lighter-hearted sinner going about them

than such a rigid and vindictive saint, who had no sympathy with the frailties of humanity.

She was thinking about her divorced husband to-night, for she never ceased to think about him—the man she had once loved, as far as she was capable of love. Affection to her meant always a misery and a reproach, the dead more to be considered than the living, and yesterday a better thing than to day. She was the woman who ever casts her glances backwards, and hugged regret as a greater treasure than possession.

She was morbidly and savagely restless to-night, pacing the narrow confines of that chamber as a tigress paces its cage; now looking from her window with a muttered imprecation against the beauty and stillness of the night, the brightness of the moon on the river, the levity and laughter of those poverty-stricken and hard-worked women who lived under her, who could be happy in spite of their miserable surroundings; now turning over the pages of that open Book with feverish fingers to find some passage suitable to her frame of mind.

She had done right to liberate herself from that bondage of iniquity, to repudiate and divorce her husband, who had so grievously wronged her—how, she could not now definitely say. Yet he must have done so, to fill her with the savage feelings which controlled her.

The room and the atmosphere were clear to her eyes. She felt alone and lonely, as she had been for long and as she would be while life remained, for she could not love again. She no longer had the capability of enjoyment, therefore to her all pleasure was a snare and a delusion.

"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" she cried, as she flung herself on her knees and tried to pray.

Yet although she could not see with her blinded eyes, she was environed with vitality and life, and the chamber was crammed with active intelligences. Round her were a crowd of cold, sad and loveless spirits, an ancestral line of implacable and embittered spectres—wives who had hated their husbands, men who had suspected and loathed their wives, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, with fathers and mothers who had in life regarded those bound to them with reasonless and undying abhorrence—too cold for vice, they were all virtuous as she was, with the pitiless virtue that crushed out charity with love.

They whispered constantly to her racked heart and throbbing brain, pointing with lean fingers to the bitter passages, leaving her not one instant of peace—spirits that had been tormented during their earth pilgrimage, and still remained on earth to pour their malign poison into the mortal and anguished spirits whom they influenced.

On the open pages hung that dense cloud of black and snake-like activity, the evil wishes and thoughts of so many beings who had lived and died creating those morbid conceptions. They were hideous and filmy monstrosities, with beastly heads and formless bodies, like the emanations of a putrid pond. Interlaced and coweringly they writhed about, with gaping mouths and slimy tendrils, so thick as they floated and hung amongst the space that they seemed like a dense black fog to the spiritualised vision.

This foul and icy living fog filled the chamber and covered both Bible and woman, spreading through the open window and over the city till London seemed

shrouded with it, although, to the eyes of the woman, the night seemed warm and the sky clear.

Amid this evil darkness and chilly horror two spirits fought and strove valiantly to drive back these loveless and gloomy spirits, to clear the atmosphere from this vile fog, and impress the victim with better thoughts. They had struggled long to gain the victory ; two loving spirits against a host of hatreds. They were Adela and Philip at their appointed work, praying for strength, yet soul-sick and wearied with their futile efforts.

As the woman approached her Bible to read, those lean and cold spectres moved her eyes and fingers to those passages which were likely to add to her own bitter thoughts, while Adela pointed to and whispered the words of Hope, Faith and Charity, and while she did this Philip pushed with all his strength to keep back the pressing crowd.

"He has rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

"Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand.

"When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayers become sin.

"Let his days be few and another take his office.

"Let the extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the strangers spoil his labour.

"Let there be none to extend mercy unto him.

"Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out."

The fiendish suggesters had made her open the Book

at the hundred and ninth Psalm, that horrible appeal of the vindictive savage,—

“For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

“I am gone like a shadow when it declineth : I am tossed up and down like the locust.”

Adela turned the sacred page rapidly, and suggested to the hot and fevered eyes,—

“The works of the Lord are great.

“He is honourable and glorious, and His righteousness endureth for ever.

“The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

“He raiseth the poor out of the dust.

“Gracious is the Lord, and righteous : yea, our God is merciful.

“Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His mercy endureth for ever.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

“What can I believe, what shall I do?” moaned the poor, spirit-fought-over woman, as she flung herself on her knees again, turning the leaves over, as she thought, at random, seeking for a sign, yet guided by the light fingers of Adela.

“Ye judge after the flesh, I judge no man.

“Judge not that ye be not judged.

“Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil, but whosoever smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

"Thou hast heard that it hath been said, Thou shall love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you."

As the woman read these words, the evil ones fell back from her for a time, while the cloud of darkness lifted for a little. Then Philip paused to take breath, while Adela murmured,—

"Oh, Philip, I am so weary; it seems so long, so hopeless."

As she moaned this the dark cloud of evil conceptions suddenly parted, as if cleft in two, and next instant Apollonius stood beside them.

"You have both done much, although it appears so little. Let me aid you with this poor soul, at present stranded on the flinty rocks of that narrow and hopeless faith. Yes, it is a difficult task to push back and disarm those other lost spirits who are drawn here by the bonds of blood, harder to liberate such spirits than to lift the most degraded of criminals, because he knows that he has done wrong, while she and they still think that they have done right, that their cold and loveless morality is good, and their vindictive wrath just."

"Oh, friend, it seemed so hopeless before you came; we can do so little."

"It requires a mortal's strength; therefore I have come, for I still retain my mortal frame."

"But will she not see you, and resent your presence? She is very proud and unapproachable," said Philip. To which the sage replied,—

"No, she cannot see me any more than she can you or the black swarm that environ and possess her. Stand near me while I drive the evil from her."

The woman was now lying back in her chair, exhausted as Adela and Philip were, while the gloomy spirits had drawn back at the new presence with lowering brows; the black filmy cloud also had risen to the ceiling, and seemed to cling there like smoke.

The sage approached the woman, with Philip and Adela on each side of him, and laying his hands upon her head, after a softly uttered prayer, cried out,—

"Come forth, thou unclean brood!"

At the command, so sternly uttered, the woman sprang from her chair, and uttering a loud scream, fell to the ground, writhing and frothing at the mouth as in a fit; then, while she still muttered and struggled, from her lips burst a thick black mass that poured upon the floor like ink, and then rose and floated up to the ceiling in smoke-like eddies, dragons, snakes, and other horrible monsters. As they left her, her struggles gradually ceased, until at last she lay passive and lifeless, with closed lids and pallid cheeks.

"You can leave her now for a little time, for she is freed from the evil influences that have poisoned her life, those malignant enemies of the human race. Go and rest; and while you are gone I will watch over her for you. But the victory is not yet gained, for the enemies will try again to get possession. Only time and your united efforts will give her the complete liberty. Go, get strength, and come again, for there is much to do still on earth."

Then Philip, obedient to the advice of the sage,

took his wearied love in his arms, and with a tender and pitying glance at the still and suffering face of her who had been his wife, passed away from that gruesome darkness into the light.

THE END.

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